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THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT,

A SERIES OF

SERMONS

BY THE MOST

EMINENT DIVINES OF THE SCOTTISH CHURCH,

FORMING A COMPLETE

BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY.

VOL. V.

TWENTY-SECOND EDITION, STEREOTYPED.

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THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. J SYME, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM MACLURE, Glasgow.

OUR FIRST DUTY IS TO SEEK THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOHN SYM,
Minister of the Old Greyfriar's Church, Edinburgh.

"*Thy kingdom come.*"—MATTHEW vi. 10.

THE reverence due to the Supreme Being requires that we should order our speech aright before him; and, in the prayer which Christ taught his disciples, a wise and obvious method is observed in the order in which the several petitions are presented. The first three petitions have a direct and special reference to God; in the last three we solicit blessings which are more directly personal. This classification indicates design; and the peculiar nature of the classification is very instructive, teaching us, as it does, that even in our prayers, in which we are disposed to be selfishly personal, we should give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, and seek first the kingdom of God. It is farther to be remarked, that a method is observed in the order in which each of the petitions is presented. In regard to the former class, the petition that is first in point of order, is first in point of importance. The ultimate end for which God made us and all things, was the manifestation of his own glory. The promotion of this end, then, must be the noblest employment in which man can engage; and if his views and sentiments coincide with those of the Most High, the accomplishment of this end must be the object of his first and most earnest desire. Since the advancement of His own glory, then, is the great object that God has in view in all that he does, it lies upon us as a duty not only of imperative obligation, but also of prime importance, to seek the accomplishment of this His great design. And as this petition is thus most righteously, so it is most naturally preferred to the first place in that form of prayer which Christ taught to his disciples. The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. He only prays acceptably who is renewed after the image of Him who created him. But if the advancement of His own glory is the grand object for which God made us and all things, and if he may so speak the object of his chief desire, and if the acceptable worshipper is renewed in righteousness, knowledge, and true holiness, after the image of God, then it is obvious that the great object and chief desire of God and of the renewed man must be one and the same; and while it is and must be the last wish of a man retaining his native selfishness and depravity, that God should be glorified in all his works, and especially that he should be known and sanctified by his intelligent creatures, it is on the other hand the most natural of all things, that the new man, in addressing his supplications to his heavenly Father, should pour forth first the uppermost wish of his heart, saying, "Hallowed be thy name."

It is not, then, we conceive, a fanciful or far-fetched idea, that this petition was intended to take precedence of all others; nor is it less natural and wise that it should be followed by the petition of the text, inasmuch as the coming of the kingdom of God was that event which was to afford the most illustrious manifestation of the glory of God—that event whereby God was most signally to sanctify himself, and which was to afford to his rational creatures the most ample aids and opportunities for hallowing his name; and this petition again wisely and naturally precedes the third; because the coming of the kingdom of God was that event which was most fully and effectually to discover the way, and supply the inducements, and furnish the means for enabling us to do the will of God in earth as it is done in heaven.

There is, then, a wise and obvious method in the order in which the several petitions in this prayer are presented; and it is of consequence to observe this method, not only that we may discover the wisdom of Christ manifested therein, but also that we may come to the consideration of each of

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the petitions under that sense of its importance and desirableness, which is indicated by the place and prominence assigned to it. The kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, is a phrase which is used in various significations by our Lord and his Apostles. Without enumerating all the meanings which have been attached to it, we may observe, that as it is used in the text, it has frequently been considered as referring to the kingdom of providence, the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory. But God reigned in the kingdom of providence as much before the coming of Christ as he has done since. At no time did he cease to exercise his providential government, and at no time, therefore, from the creation of the world, could the prayer be offered in reference to his providence: "Thy kingdom come." Nor can we consider the text as referring to the kingdom of grace, as that phrase is sometimes understood. If by the kingdom of grace is meant the reign of the Spirit in our souls—and this seems to be its meaning in such passages as these, "the kingdom of God is within you:" "the kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"—then this reign was not to *come;* it had already been exercised in all the Old Testament saints, and God had always had a seed to serve Him. Besides, if the "kingdom of God" means in the text the kingdom of grace, in the sense we have supposed, then it will be difficult to distinguish between the second petition and the third—between the prayer that God would rule in us effectually by his Spirit, and the prayer, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Nor does the petition before us refer chiefly at least to the kingdom of glory—the heavenly state. If by the coming of the kingdom of glory we mean our admission, individually, into the company of the just made perfect, then it would have been much more natural to pray that we might be brought into that kingdom, than to pray that it might come to us; and, besides, when we offer such a prayer, it should always be qualified, as it is not in the case before us, by a patient resignation to the will of God, and a readiness to abide in the flesh, if more needful for ourselves or for others. If by the coming of the kingdom of glory is meant the final restitution of all things, then this, though desirable, cannot be considered as the primary meaning of the words before us. At the time when our Lord taught this prayer to his disciples, it was an era that the Jews looked for the coming of the Messiah, and they expected him to come as a king. This expectation arose from certain well-known predictions in the Old Testament Scriptures. "The God of heaven," says Daniel, (ii. 44.) "shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." And, again, (vii. 13, 14,) "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." To the same purpose are other prophecies. In correspondence with these predictions, you will remember that John the Baptist was sent before Christ to prepare his way, and to preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Subsequently our Lord sent out first his twelve Apostles, and afterwards he appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come; and whether they were received or rejected, they were at all events to bear this testimony, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." And last of all, our Saviour himself went forth saying the same words, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When these things are considered, and when you consider that this prayer was originally taught to those who were sent to announce the coming of the kingdom of God, little doubt will remain—that Christ, in instructing his Apostles to use this petition, taught them to pray for the timely fulfilment of the Old Testament predictions and the introduction of the new dispensation. By the coming of the kingdom of God, then, we understand the institution of a form of government which is without us—not the exercise of that government which is within us; in a word, we regard the second petition as seeking the accomplishment of Christ's work; the third as seeking the accomplishment of the Spirit's work.

The time when the christian dispensation was introduced, then, was the time when the prophecy of Daniel began to be fulfilled—that the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should never be moved. This dispensation is called the *kingdom* of God, by which expression we are not to understand the numbers or the territory over which the government should extend. The coming of the kingdom cannot signify the coming of the time when subjects should

begin to be raised up to Him who is King of saints; for, as we have already observed, God has always had a seed to serve him. Nor does it mean the coming of a time when a great addition should be made to the number of the faithful, under a form of government already established. If this were the meaning of the text, the *coming* of the kingdom would be an inappropriate expression. The kingdom of God, as the phrase is used in the text, means, we conceive, not so much the realm or dominion of God, as the form of government or constitution of His realm. We believe that the word in the original, here translated "kingdom," will bear this interpretation; but, at all events, when you consider that the promulgation of this form of government was contemporaneous with its adoption; that forthwith, on the form of government being made known, there were some who willingly surrendered themselves to it; when you consider this, you will easily understand how the announcement of the christian dispensation should be called the setting up of a kingdom, and how our Saviour, with all futurity before him, should instruct his followers to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

God is the great King and Governor of all. Before we can fulfil the part of faithful subjects, however, it is necessary that we should know his laws and the form of his government. But, by the fall, the law originally written in our hearts has been in a great measure effaced, and the fall has also rendered a change in the divine administration indispensably necessary to our salvation. As it belonged to God only to make the requisite alteration in his mode of government, he only could make known to us what the alteration was. It was essential, therefore, that the laws to be obeyed, and the peculiar constitution under which we were to be trained for immortal bliss, should be supernaturally revealed. This revelation was partially afforded under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations; but the light which they afforded was comparatively dim, and they were intended to prepare for another and more perfect dispensation which was never to be abolished, and which should extend from sea to sea—a dispensation more simple and spiritual, yielding the clearest discoveries of duty and the fullest development of the divine plans. In this dispensation there is revealed to us all that we are to believe concerning God, and all the duty which God requires of us. Through the satisfaction of our great High Priest, a way of access has been opened up to the holiest of all. God may be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. Man may be imperfect, and yet serve God acceptably, and look for a reward in the kingdom of the just. Through the cross of our Lord Jesus, a reconciliation has been effected between heaven and earth, and provision has been made for our final deliverance from sin itself and all its consequences. And now that this work has been accomplished by our great Mediator; now that God is enabled to govern us in righteousness, and yet enrich us with the rewards of a blissful immortality, he hath set up a kingdom, he hath instituted a form of government, he hath introduced a dispensation in which ambassadors are appointed to go forth in the name of the King to proclaim an amnesty to his rebellious subjects; to make known to them the way of reconciliation and peace; to instruct them in the nature of the government which the Almighty has established over the fallen children of man; to set before them the privileges and immunities, and many inestimable advantages belonging to its subjects, and to invite them to subject themselves to the authority of the Most High, and to cast in their lot with those whose God is the Lord. And in this dispensation, also, officers have been appointed to explain and to execute those laws which are essential to the prosperity of the kingdom on earth. He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; and to them it belongs to teach, and warn, and comfort, according to their necessities, the people of God—the subjects of the kingdom, and to cause them to observe the various institutions which have been appointed, and to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. In a word, the christian dispensation unfolds the means by which we are restored to the divine favour, instructs us in our duty to the great moral Governor, supplies the most powerful inducements to the fulfilment of that duty, and teaches us how that heavenly strength is to be obtained, by means of which alone we are enabled to do those things which are well pleasing in the eyes of the King. We are all the subjects of the King of heaven and earth; but before we can be dutiful and obedient subjects to Him as the King of saints, we must know the laws we are to obey, the nature of the government which has been instituted with regard to us, and the means by which we may be enabled and disposed to obey these laws and submit to this government. When the christian dispensation was introduced, this knowledge was afforded

and the nature and character of the government made known; and this was the event, the arrival of which was implored when the disciples of Christ lifted up their voice, in the words of the text, and said, "Thy kingdom come."

Such then, my friends, is a brief and imperfect view of the meaning of the text. And now suffer us to remind you that this petition ranks second in that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples. The desirableness of the event referred to, might be shown from many considerations. Christ is called the desire of all nations. Abraham saw his day afar off and was glad. Many prophets, and kings, and righteous men, desired to see one of the days of the Son of Man. The Mosaic dispensation afforded but the dim light of the early dawn; it was a preparatory dispensation adapted to a peculiar people during the pupillage of the world. Its glory and excellence lay in this, that it typified and fore-shadowed the kingdom to come. We would not speak disparagingly of the former dispensation: but when you consider that it was limited to the Jewish people; that it enforced the observance of many, and burdensome, and expensive ceremonies; and when you consider the marvellous simplicity, and sublimity, and the universal applicability of the Christian dispensation; when you consider how obscure and how meagre is the knowledge of God and of his will, which could be derived from the one, compared with that which you derive from the other; when you consider that the former was upheld in the faith and hope of Christ's accomplishing the work he had undertaken to perform, whereas the latter is established, because Christ has finished the work which was given him to do, then you will acknowledge that the one had no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. Even in its best estate, the Mosaic revelation was not so full and satisfactory, as to quench or cool the longing for the time when the desire of all nations should come to his temple, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. Nay, the great end of the Mosaic dispensation was to kindle and keep alive the expectation of the coming of Him in whom the ancient prophecies were to find their fulfilment, and who was to prove the substance or body which the types and sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation foreshadowed. But, besides, at the time of Christ's appearing, the Jewish religion was grievously corrupted by the traditions and doctrines of men, and few were left who rightly understood or waited in faith for the consolation. And when you reflect on the pride of the Pharisees, and the profligacy of the Sadducees, and the ignorance and corruptions of the people, you will be persuaded, that even among the Jews, the chosen depositaries of the oracles of truth, the knowledge of God and of his laws was in a great measure extinguished, and that where it existed it was for the most part wofully corrupted. And beyond the pale of the Jewish church there was a wide world lying in wickedness. Salvation was of the Jews; and even as the heathen did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. There was a great moral Governor over them, but they knew him not; and they worshipped and served the creature instead of the Creator. This, then, being the state of the world when Christ appeared, the Jewish religion being in its best estate, surrounded with much obscurity, and in fact corrupted and perverted, and the heathens being strangers to the covenants of promise, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world, who that has one feeling of regard for the honour of God, or one feeling of regard for the welfare of his fellow-men, is not constrained to acknowledge, that it was intensely desirable that the kingdom of God should come? But the fact, as we have said—the fact that this petition ranks second in order in that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, tells more impressively, perhaps, than any other consideration, the desirableness of the coming of the kingdom of God. You all know that that which we desire most is sought first. Our prayer is a mere form, it is a hypocritical mockery of God, if that which is most desired is not solicited first; and however sore and sweeping may be the condemnation which this consideration passes upon each of us, it passes no rebuke upon our sinless Saviour. How forcibly and impressively, then, are we taught the desirableness of the coming of the kingdom of God! when He, the holy One and the Just, as he walked this world of sin and shame, and contemplated the prostrate millions of mankind who were ignorant of God, whom to know is life eternal, the contemptible because voluntary slaves of the most merciless and cruel despotism; when he surveyed the world around him, and thought of the immortal minds, a multitude which no man can number, who were framed for godlike exercises, and fitted for divine enjoyments—these seduced from the

kingdom of the free and led captive by the devil at his will. How impressively are we taught the desirableness of the event referred to in the text, when he, who is the light and the life of man, as he walked this world and considered its ignorance, and misery, and sin, instructed his disciples, after giving to the Lord the glory due unto his name, to breathe out their souls in the petition of the text, "Thy kingdom come!"

The kingdom of God, my friends, has come. Eighteen hundred years have rolled over our earth since the Gospel dispensation was introduced. But though we cannot now pray that the kingdom of God may come, in the same sense as they did who lived before the fulness of time, still we are required to pray that it may be extended to the uttermost ends of the earth; that it may come in all its purity, and to the fullest extent. It is no doubt true, that the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon many; that in various quarters its ordinances are faithfully observed, and that there are in the world a multitude of professed adherents to the Gospel, and we trust not a few who have surrendered themselves heartily to all its requirements. But if you except the island in which we live, and how small a space does it occupy on the map of the world; if you except the island in which we live, and perhaps some portions of the western continent, where, or in what quarter of the globe, can it be said that the dispensation of the Gospel is generally known? Here you have the crescent retaining unmolested possession of a dominion won from the cross, and the false prophet with his sword in one hand, and with the other pointing to his paradise of brutal sensuality, lording it over many millions. There you have Popery with its corruptions and blasphemies, depriving its votaries—say rather its victims, of the pure Word of God; substituting its unhallowed dogmata for the doctrines of the Bible, and teaching as the truth of God the wild wonders of traditionary extravagance, the fooleries and fables of apocryphal writings, thus taking away the key of knowledge, and shutting up the pathway to the kingdom of heaven, that none may enter in. Here you have infidelity boasting of her discoveries, and with great swelling words of vanity proclaiming the triumphs of reason, yet all the while confessedly unable to say, how God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly; confessedly unable to explain how God can be inflexibly just, and yet be merciful to sinful man. And there, again, you have degrading and hideous superstitions, such that one knows not whether the more to weep over them for their pitiableness, or loathe them for their abominations. When we consider how small is the number of those who know the truth as it is in Jesus, compared with those who are ignorant and out of the way; when we consider that wherever the kingdom of God is not set up, there the God of this world, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, reigns in uncontrolled supremacy. Oh! my friends, when we consider these things, we cannot feel that the circumstances of mankind now are so changed from what they were during our Saviour's journey upon earth, as to forbid the belief that, were he again to visit this prodigal planet, he would teach us, as he taught his disciples of old, to give to this petition the second place in our supplications; and after saying, "Hallowed be thy name," to say, "Thy kingdom come."

And now, brethren, let us beseech you to give to the petition of the text its due place and prominence in your supplications at a throne of grace. Had time permitted, we might have dwelt upon the benefits which flow from the knowledge of the Gospel of God; but as our time is drawing to a close, we can only recommend the subject to your private and prayerful meditation. Before concluding, however, we may observe, that those whom Christ instructed to use this prayer he sent out to preach, saying, "The kingdom of Heaven is at hand;" and you can easily understand how this commission should urge them all the more frequently and earnestly to offer up this prayer. It will afford a similar encouragement to us to bear in mind the promise, that God will give the Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession. If the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God were a matter of uncertainty or doubt, we could not offer the petition of the text with any satisfaction or confidence. Such a doubt would operate as a restraint upon us, oftentimes preventing us from offering this prayer, and always depriving us of all life and earnestness in offering it. But, brethren, we know that whatever ignorance or sin may remain in the world, the hour is coming when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. "The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which is indeed the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

"The stone that was cut out without hands, hath smitten the image; and the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, shall be broken in pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor; and the wind shall carry them away, that no place be found for them: and the stone that smote the image shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth." Pray ye, then, "Thy kingdom come." Pray with the confidence of men who know that if they ask, they shall receive. Pray that all idolatry may be out-thrown, and that the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified. Pray that the Jews may be brought in with the fulness of the Gentile nations. Even in a temporal point of view, the extension of the kingdom of God is most desirable. The knowledge of the Gospel enlarges and strengthens the mind, and purifies and humanizes the heart. Already its power has been manifested in raising man to the highest ranks in civilized life. It has charmed away the savage ferocity which glowed in the eye, and scowled from the forehead of the wandering and houseless horde; and instead, it has introduced the habits of honest industry, and the quiet and the comforts of a settled home, and lighted up the smile of cheerful contentment, and brought into busy and blessed circulation the charities of good neighbourhood and brotherly affection, with all their sister graces. It is beyond all doubt, that the religion of the Bible makes men happier even in this life; so that the philanthropist, as well as the Christian, is concerned to desire the coming of the kingdom of God into those places which are still the habitations of darkness, the abodes of superstition and horrid cruelty. But it is on you, my friends, who have been called out of darkness into marvellous light, who have known the honours, the privileges and blessings of the kingdom of God, and who are thus qualified and constrained to bear testimony to the desirableness of the extension of the kingdom of God, the propagation of the Gospel, and the universal observance of its laws and ordinances; it is on you that our hope rests—on you that the destinies of thousands yet unborn depend. As you desire the honour of your God and King, as you value immortal souls, be ye earnest in supplicating God in the language of the text. There is a feeling in the minds of worldly men which opposes itself to the offering of this petition. They dislike the word kingdom. It speaks not to them of a gracious and omnipotent Protector; it speaks not to them of a wise and fatherly government; it speaks not to them of security, and peace, and joy. It suggests to them restraints to which they are unwilling to submit, laws which they hate, and a punishment which they dread. But just as of old it was an honour and safeguard to say, I am a Roman citizen; just as it is a pride and a privilege to say, I am a free-born Briton; even so should ye glory in this, that ye belong to the kingdom of God. Its laws are all perfect, its subjects are all the excellent ones of the earth; its Head is the universal Sovereign, the living God. But while you glory in this, that you are the children of the kingdom, see that you live as such, being diligent in following the teaching of the text, and praying for the prosperity of Zion. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity be within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good." "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Amen.

THE DUTY OF FOLLOWING CHRIST, AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE CONDUCT OF HIS DISCIPLES;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. STEPHEN'S, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 8TH MARCH, 1835,

By the Rev. WILLIAM MACLURE.

"*After these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.*"—LUKE v. 27, 28.

It is scarcely necessary, even for the sake of connexion, to advert to the circumstances which preceded the event which is here recorded. The fact which our text relates may be considered apart from the narrative which goes before it; and yet, though it should stand isolated and alone, it would furnish matter of very abundant remark.

But since the circumstance with which our text is associated, is introduced with these words: "And after *these things* he went forth, and saw a publican," &c., it may not be altogether unnecessary, perhaps, simply to observe, that our Lord had just performed the miracle of curing instantaneously, and at a word, a man whom palsy had utterly disabled for exertion. Those who carried him were so fully satisfied, it would appear, of Christ's ability to cure—a persuasion which evidently seems to have been shared in by the paralytic man, that having essayed in vain to secure access into his presence, by reason of the multitude who had crowded into the house where he was discoursing of divine things, they proceeded, with considerable difficulty to themselves, to let him down from the house-top through the tiling into the very midst before Jesus. This action was so expressive of the faith which prompted it, that our Lord, perceiving it at once, said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee;" language which, assuming as it did a power which none but Divinity could claim, stirred up, as we are given to understand, the secret resentment and reasonings of the scribes who had come there, it would appear, with no other intent than that of cavilling at the language, or misinterpreting the miracles of Christ. In virtue of his omniscience, our Lord was able to discern the thoughts which were passing in their minds; and hence, as if answering these secret thoughts, he said unto them, "What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk." And then to show that he was not only possessed of that infinite knowledge which disclosed to him the very inmost secrets of their hearts, but that he was possessed of that omnipotence—that sovereign and almighty power which attested the divinity of his nature; and, in his underived power of working miracles, proved also his authority to forgive sins, he said unto the sick of the palsy, "Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house." "And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house glorifying God." "And they were *all* amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day." Now, in this event, we have an instance of the power of Christ over the temporal diseases of men. He had power to heal "all manner of sickness and all manner of disease"—a power which he exercised to confirm the authority of his claims, and which, in all its exercise, was so deeply expressive of the compassion which he was so ready to extend towards the infirmities of our race, and a power besides, be it remarked, which was inherent in his own glorious nature, and not derived, as in the case of his Apostles, from a source extraneous and foreign to himself.

But, in the event which succeeds, we have an instance of still greater power than that which is involved in the healing of any temporal disease. We find him controlling not merely the elements of nature, as he had often done, or the circumstances which conduce to the health of our temporal frames, as in the instance of the paralytic man, but we find him swaying the very elements of the mind and will, and proving that the moral and the intellectual powers of man are no less subject to his sovereign control. "*After these things*," we are told, "he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, *Follow me*." And if we turn to the 4th chapter of Matthew, at the 18th verse, we will find that this was the very language in which he called some others of his disciples to forsake the occupations in which they were engaged, and to cleave devotedly to his cause. "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."

Now, we are desirous to build some observations upon this language, and, in explaining and enforcing it, to show the necessity of our leaving all—of our leaving every thing that can tend to bind us to the world, and distract us from the interests of heaven, and of our *following* Him who has called us into his marvellous light, and is willing to prepare us for the light and glory of his own heavenly kingdom. It was certain disciples, you will observe, who are here spoken of as being called, and who are also declared to have followed Jesus; and, therefore, in alluding to their circumstances, as connected with the command which was addressed to them, we may draw, as we proceed, some light to this great and now general admonition.

In the first place, the individual named Levi, who is spoken of by St. Luke, is said to have been a publican—a term which is explained in some degree, when it is mentioned that he was found "sitting at the receipt of custom." A publican was one, as most of you are aware, who was appoint-

ed by the Roman governors to gather in the taxes or tributes imposed upon the people. They were of two kinds; the general farmers of these taxes, and the under-farmers or deputies, who were empowered to act in the several provinces under their authority and direction. The first were men of considerable weight and influence with government, and among these we may suppose Zaccheus to have been, who is described by St. Luke as being "the chief among the publicans;" while the other, or inferior class, among whom we may suppose Levi and Matthew to have been, were men who, in the exercise of their office, were regarded with the mingled feelings of contempt, and hatred, and jealousy by the Jews.

These feelings, we need scarcely say, were called up by the obnoxious character of their office, which was nothing less than that of exacting from them, as a conquered people, the custom imposed upon them by their conquerors, the Romans. "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man," was the language which they were at all times fond of employing; and thus exulting in their privileges, and yet smarting under the exactions which were so restrictive of their freedom, and so offensive to their pride, they were disposed to visit upon the heads of the poor collectors of this revenue the odium which was attachable to the tax or imposition itself.

It was thus that the name of publican became expressive, in their mind, of all that was abandoned and profane. They looked upon it as involving the very depth of degradation, and as excluding from the favour of heaven, just as it provoked the resentment of men; and hence to be a publican, in their estimation, was to be a person of notorious character,—a sinner above all men, and to be classed invariably with offenders;—unentitled, therefore, to the slightest degree of respect, and worthy only of scorn and reprobation. Thus was it asked of Christ's disciples by the Jews, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" And thus too was it uttered in the vain-glorious spirit of the Pharisee: "Lord, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." We see, then, from this language, that from a state expressive of sin and degradation was the call to follow him addressed by Jesus to his disciples. There was nothing, for instance, in the character or condition of the individual before us to warrant his selection to this high and distinguished calling. There was no title existing in himself whereby he could claim it as peculiarly his own. He was a member of an obnoxious profession, and he was, so far as we know, unadorned with any lofty or brilliant attainments. We are not referring in the meantime to the condition of these men as poor and illiterate, and as affording from their original circumstances, as contrasted with the noble future discharge of their apostolic duties, a powerful argument for the truth and efficacy of our holy religion. We are referring to it simply as pointing out in the term, publican, in the present instance, and in the ideas which were usually associated with that term, the very condition in which by nature we are placed, and from which Christ is so willing to redeem us. Naturally, we say, there is nothing in any one of us to entitle us to selection on the part of Christ. On the contrary, there is every thing that might lead him to reject us, and dispose him, in the purity of his character and the beauty of his own perfections, to pass us by as unworthy of his notice.

In all our character and condition, naturally considered, and as seen in the light of his untainted holiness, there is nothing which *his* pure and omniscient eye can possibly desire.—We are not engaged in his service.—We are not contemplating his works.—We are not endeavouring to ascend through the survey and admiration of these to the adoring contemplation of his excellence, or aspiring in the light of his perfections, to have our natures assimilated to his. There is nothing of all this, when *he* comes to us on his errand of mercy, and calls upon us to follow him as his disciples and his friends. We are engaged in the service of the world at that very time, intent, like the fishermen of Galilee, or the despised receiver of customs, on the affairs of a life which is only preparatory to another, but for which other we are not mindful or solicitous to prepare.—Yes, my friends, we are either busied in the pursuit of some gainful and engrossing occupation, or we are sitting at destructive ease in the degradation of sin, reviewing our extending treasures, and yet thirsting to increase them. If active, we are not active in God's service—if at ease, we are not at ease in Zion, or because we have sought peace and found it of the Lord. We are active—we are diligent in business; but it is the business solely of the world, and the activity which labours to promote it. And we are at ease, or apparently so, in reference to eternity and its all-important concerns; not because we have attained rest in Jesus, or the assurance of his joy, but because we have cried peace, peace to our consciences, when in reality there was none.—Nay, more, we are not merely engaged about other things, and indifferent as to the work of Christ, and preparedness for heaven, but we are actually indisposed to

God's service; yea, more than all this, we are actively and individually, we are by nature and by wicked works in hostility to his perfections, and in opposition to his laws. We like not in this state to retain even the knowledge of God in all our hearts.—We like it not, because our natures are at variance with his; and the knowledge which all his works and ways, independently of his revealed will, are calculated to afford, impress us with the conviction that his justice is arrayed against us; that his perfections are dishonoured by our lives, that his law is frowning upon our impenitence and sin; and thus fearing the very perfections which our natures were created to love, we are disposed to raise up the world as a barrier to shut them from the view; or, if regarding them in the midst of our iniquities, to regard them only with aversion and alarm. We repeat, then, that we are selected by Christ in the exercise of free and sovereign compassion. We are called to be disciples of his, not because *we* have loved *him*, but because *he* has loved *us*. He has looked upon us in our blood, and saved us in his mercy; calling us by an holy calling, not through works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own free and heavenly grace, that the purpose according to election might stand, and that we should be to the praise of *his* glory who first trusted in Christ.

2. The inclination or willingness to follow onward to know the Lord, is not occasioned by any exercise of our own powers, but is wrought in us by the operation of Christ's own mighty power.

Our Saviour, as we find in the course of his journeyings, and his labours of ardent and unwearied love, came to the disciples whom we have already referred to, and as they were engaged in their worldly and respective avocations, called upon them to follow him—to what point or for what purpose they were not given to understand. Now, if any person, with the humble mien and in the unassuming guise in which we know that our Saviour was manifested upon earth, were to come and address us in language of a firm and authoritative character; if he were to say to us, "Follow me," and yet were to furnish us with no explanation of this injunction—by what authority it was issued, and for what purpose we were to follow, most unquestionably we would hesitate to do so, till we were dealt with a little more plainly and explicitly in the matter, or we would consider the unexplained command as a most unwarrantable interference with our actions and pursuits. We *will* not obey, we *will* not follow at your call, would be the natural dictate and expression of the mind; and straightway we would turn to the interests or the cares in which we had previously been engaged, and forget the individual who had come to us, or remember him only as a most singular intruder. It would be different indeed, were it some one of the mighty of the earth, the princes or nobles among the sons of men, who held in their hands the reins of empire, and wielded the resources of unbounded wealth—were they or any one of them to come and command us *immediately* to follow, our minds would not so surely and suddenly be inclined to recoil. We would think of the authority by which we were enjoined, and look to the benefits which obedience might secure; and though we knew not the cause for which the injunction was given, but simply that we were to follow the distinguished individual who had come to us with the view of issuing his command, our hearts might perhaps respond implicitly to the call, and *that* because we respected the authority, or, it may be, anticipated the reward.

But in Jesus there was nothing outwardly to distinguish him. He was surrounded with no trappings of external dignity, no insignia of honour, no symbols of opulence or power. He was meek and lowly in his deportment—the reputed son of a carpenter; arrayed like the meanest of the people, and bearing in his aspect the suffering, yet subdued, expression of the man of sorrows. And yet he called the disciples, and they implicitly obeyed him. No sooner did he issue the command than they hastened to fulfil it. He said to them, "*Follow me*," *and immediately they left all and followed him*." Now, we argue from this, that a great and decided change must have instantaneously passed upon their minds. The mere command of Jesus, considered apart from his divinity—considered apart from his power over the understanding and the heart, could never have produced this effect. But here the command was given, and without apparent authority on the part of Christ, or any thing which might seem to add weight and influence to his address, his command was at once listened to and obeyed—no hesitation being expressed, no reluctance being manifested; but, on the contrary, the most cheerful, the most prompt and unreserved obedience being paid by those who had the very instant before been engaged in their wonted avocations, and engrossed with the interests of the world.

They might have seen, perhaps, on former occasions, some of the miracles which Christ had wrought, and been impressed with the convictions which these were calculated to make; but we have no assurance of this in the inspired record before us, and

even though we had, it would have only proved that the "power of God and the wisdom of God" had, through the instrumentality of these wonders, been at work upon their consciences and hearts.—We say, then, that the grace of God must have operated *directly* in this instance to the enlightenment of their minds, and the regulation of their wills. On no other principle can we account for the conduct they displayed.—In no other way can we comprehend, in their peculiar circumstances, the cheerfulness and promptitude of their obedience.—Levi was sitting at the receipt of custom. Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, were casting their nets into the sea. James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, were busy mending their nets on the shores of Galilee; and yet when Jesus came, and addressed them simply in these words, "Follow me," at once did they listen to his voice, and obey his will. "They forsook all, and followed him."—How different this from the conduct of those three individuals, of whom mention is made at the close of the 9th chapter of Luke! "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," was the language of one to Jesus as he journeyed by the way; and yet when the Saviour warned him of the trials and privations which, as a follower of his, he must necessarily expect, we find not that he adhered to the resolution which he had expressed. "Follow me," was the language of Christ to another, but here an excuse was ready: "Suffer me first to go and bury my father," was the answer. A little delay was wanted—a little postponement of necessary duty was demanded, and then the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of righteousness and peace might, perhaps, afterwards be attended to. "Lord, I will follow thee," was again the language of another, but to all this seeming readiness there was a clause of reservation attached: "I will follow thee, but let me first go, and bid them farewell which are at home in my house." He would follow him ere long, at least he was forward to declare this; but first he was desirous, as if the sacrifice he was about to make, was of a great and afflictive character, he was desirous to go to his friends, and bid them all a solemn and deliberate farewell, as if he were never more to behold them, and as if he could safely expose himself to their solicitations and regrets. Unlike these men, the disciples professed nothing, but when called, they followed. The Spirit of the Lord was with them, and at once they felt it to be their duty and their privilege to obey. They resembled the men who acknowledged Saul to be their king, when Samuel announced him to be the chosen of God to the throne of Israel, and when the children of Belial were despising and setting him at nought: they resembled these firm and devoted men, of whom it is said, in the expressive language of Scripture, "that when Saul went up to Gibeah, there went up with him likewise a band of men, *whose hearts God had touched*." In the case of the disciples, God also had touched and influenced their hearts. And unless this has been accomplished in our own happy and individual experience, we cannot in reality be the disciples of Jesus. We are not learning in the school of Him who came to guide us into the way of all truth, and train us for immortality; and whatever be the professions which we make, we have not yet come to the firm and immediate determination to *follow him onward to perfection*, undaunted by difficulties, and unmoved by trials.

3. We would remark, that when the Spirit of God *does* touch our hearts, and the power of Christ is thus made manifest in our lives, we are at once enlightened as to two things—the right of Jesus to command, and his worthiness as a King and Saviour to be obeyed. All this was exemplified in the conduct of the disciples. In the prompt and cheerful obedience which they rendered, they acknowledged in the most open and decided manner the claims of Christ, and proved in the very act of following him, and leaving all that had formerly occupied their attention, and ministered to their support, that they recognised his authority to be implicitly obeyed, and at the same time signified their confidence in his ability to protect. True, they had not at this time the most clear views of his character, or the most spiritual notions of the kingdom he was to establish, but still they saw, or rather *felt* enough, to convince them that Christ was worthy of their obedience and love; and, therefore, without a moment's hesitation or reserve, they yielded the submission which he required, and determined to "follow him whithersoever he went." We admit, then, that they were not enlightened all at once, and that they were still imperfect as to their conceptions of Christ's heavenly kingdom. But this is the way in which the Spirit of divine grace in general acts upon the human understanding. He works in a gradual and progressive manner, disclosing more and more of the beauty of Christ, and of the loveliness of sacred truth, and shining inwardly upon the soul with somewhat of the brightening effulgence of that light of heaven, which rises at first with the faint dawnings of the eastern sky, until at last it opens and expands into the glorious lustre of the perfect day. But still the work of the Spirit leads us at once to exercise confidence in Christ. We see

him in a light far different from what the natural mind is at any time prone to regard him.—We see him as the chief among ten thousand—as at once our Saviour and our King—as our salvation and desire.

Now, the right which Christ has to the obedience of us all, is simply this: He has created us, and we are bound to serve him; he has preserved us, and we are bound to honour him; he has redeemed us, and we are bound to love him.

In every character and relation he is entitled to our love, and homage, and gratitude, and esteem. In truth, my friends, he has such a right to us as only the hardness and perversity of the heart has moved us at any time to dispute. He has a claim to the homage of every power—to the obedience of every principle of our nature, and *that* on the very ground of having formed them with his own hand, and fashioned them for the purposes of his glory. He it was who created by his power the whole universe of nature. He said, and it was done. He spake, and all things stood fast. He it was who laid by his might the deep foundations of the earth, and girded it with the solid rocks, and fenced it with the everlasting hills, and spread around it the multitude of his waters; and sending over all the light and beauty of his Spirit, saw and pronounced that every thing was good. And to man he gave dominion over the creatures of the earth. He breathed into him the breath of life, and imparts to him every breath he draws; and endowing him with powers and faculties which raise him infinitely above the beasts that perish, he has taught him how to exercise these powers, and direct them to their great and glorious ends.—Here, then, is the original tie which binds us unalterably to Christ, and entitles him to the love and service of our being. No other tie can ever loosen or dissolve this claim. It is the high and inalienable claim of nature.

But superadded to this, there is now the powerful, the constraining tie of sovereign and redeeming love. Christ has not only given us being, but he has saved us when that life was forfeited, and even when the sentence of eternal death had gone forth against every soul of man. And now he is showing forth his mercy in our behalf, by retaining us in this valley of vision, and sparing us from day to day, to see if, peradventure, we will listen to his imploring voice; to see if haply we will accept his overtures of grace; and laying hold of him in faith and love, lay hold at the same time of all the peace and blessedness of heaven. This, then, is the authority of Christ to command, and this the ground on which we are called on to obey. Can any claim be stronger? Can any tie be higher or more endearing than that which our Creator, our Benefactor, our Saviour prefers; and yet we feel it not, till the work of renewal has been begun, till the light of saving and of sanctifying truth has dawned upon the conscience and the heart; and then we can indeed say, and say in truth, "Unto whom, Lord, should we come, but unto thee." "We have seen thy beauty and the excellency of thy power," and we are "determined to follow thee whithersoever thou goest, glorying in nothing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world."

In following Christ, my friends, we must follow him to duty. When the Saviour issued his command to his disciples, there was before him the chequered scene of his labours; and they, as the companions of his wanderings, had to go forth and mingle in the work. He had, indeed, a work given him to do in which their labours would have been worse than useless, and in which, therefore, they did not and dared not intermeddle. He had his Father's work to accomplish; the perfections of Deity to honour; a broken law to vindicate and repair. —With this they could not interfere; for it was Deity alone that could do the work. It was Christ, the mighty God, who alone could tread the wine-press, and make glorious the sanctions of his law. But still they had duty to accomplish—duty in connexion with this great and completed work, and which it was essential for the purposes of Heaven and their own salvation, that it should be fully and effectually performed. And we too, my friends, have our duties to discharge; we have a work to do—a work which cannot be dispensed with, pure and perfect as was the work of Christ; and which, if unaccomplished here, will never be permitted in eternity to be wrought. We are to work out our salvation—all in subordination to Christ's work; and we are to do it in *time*, while yet the day of mercy is extended; and we are to do it, moreover, not as *preceding* Christ, but as *following* him in his glorious work! We are to build on his work; we are to make it the foundation elect and precious of every thing we do, and every thing we hope to enjoy. But still we are to build—still we are to work, and strive, and labour, and pursue, not *looking* at the foundation merely, but *building* steadily and surely upon it, remembering that we have enemies to encounter, and difficulties to meet; that we have the fruits

of faith and the doctrines of the cross to manifest and adorn; and that if we are wanting in these things, we are yet destitute of an interest in Christ—we are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity."

Again, my friends, we must follow the Saviour in the path of suffering. When Christ told his disciples to *follow* him, he had yet before him the scenes of his agony and death—the privations of his wanderings to feel, the hall of Pilate to encounter, the garden of Gethsemane to bear, the torture of the cross, in unmitigated anguish, to endure. And his disciples, whom he had called to follow him, had likewise their griefs and sufferings to undergo. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," was the warning which he gave them. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. They will put you out of synagogues. They will hate you for my name's sake; yea, the very time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." And we know how deeply their experience was called on to verify this warning. "They were made to suffer persecution; they were called on to be faithful unto death. They were in perils often—in perils by waters, and robbers, and heathen, and countrymen, and wilderness, and sea." "They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; in deserts, and mountains, and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—being *men* of whom the world was not worthy." And we, too, if the disciples of Jesus, must suffer grief, and trial, and persecution.—Not that the way of life is a dark and painful career, unsoothed by a single comfort, unalleviated by a single joy. The truth is, that the follower of Christ has joys which the world cannot understand, just as he has sorrows which it cannot share. He has a peace of mind which passeth knowledge, which rises far above the comprehension of the mere natural man; but then he has griefs which a stranger cannot interfere with. He has sin, appreciated in the light of divine truth, and which others slight, or banish from their thoughts;—he has this to ponder, and be ashamed of, and deplore. He has an unbelieving heart to mourn over and resist; he has a world that lieth in wickedness to lament, and strive with, and subdue.—Yes, my friends, he is one of the objects of redeeming love, and just because he is so, he is often led into the furnace of affliction, that the "trial of his faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory." True, in these days, he is not called on to resist unto blood. The fires of persecution are extinguished, and the refreshing shade of his own vine and fig-tree is above him. But still the world loveth its own, and hates and persecutes in some form or another the followers of the lowly Jesus.

There is encouragement, however, the amplest and surest encouragement. Hear the language of Christ to his people: "I will make my grace to be sufficient for you; I will perfect my strength in your weakness; I will guide you by my counsel, and receive you to my glory." "When the poor and the needy seek for water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water, that they may see, and know, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the holy One of Israel hath created it." What should move us when we have all this encouragement before us—when we have these precious promises to animate and sustain us? What should deter us from following Christ, when we know that if we walk in his steps he will strengthen us by his grace—that if we follow to the end, he will lead us into glory? What more, then, could have been done for us than has not been done? What more could we wish, than that in the hour of need we should be strengthened and sustained by his upholding arm?—And that, finally, when our race is finished, and our warfare has been accomplished, we should walk among the redeemed of the Lord, and should come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads.

See to it, then, my friends, that ye follow Christ, that ye cleave to him, individually, as the Lord your righteousness, as the foundation of your hope, as your salvation and desire, that so when the interests of this world shall have come to a close, ye may be able with triumph to exclaim, "I have fought the fight, I have finished my course!" "I am now a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror, through Him that loved me." "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life, which God, the righteous Judge, shall place upon my head."

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Discourse by the Rev. John Smyth, D.D., Glasgow.
Lecture by the Rev. David Carment, A.M., Ross-keen.

THE DUTIES OF MANKIND, AS SUBJECTS OF CIVIL AUTHORITY;

A DISCOURSE,

By the Rev. JOHN SMYTH, D.D.,
Minister of St. George's Church, Glasgow.

'*And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly; is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no? But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's. And he said unto them, Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.*"—Luke xx. 19—26.

In a previous lecture our attention was directed to the fallen condition of the Jewish church and state, as presented by the emblem of a deserted and barren vineyard. The conduct of the rulers and people of Israel, in their injurious treatment of the messengers of God, and, especially, of his own beloved Son, suggested various lessons of practical importance. Our Lord concluded his parable by reminding them of a passage of Scripture, which had a special reference to his divine mission. "He beheld them, and said, What is this that is written, the Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Verses 17, 18. Such pointed and awakening reproof was keenly felt by the chief priests and the scribes. The Evangelist relates, accordingly, that "the same hour they sought to lay hands on Jesus; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them." Ver. 19.

The self-esteem of those men was wounded to the uttermost; and, purposes of revenge which had been long and ardently cherished, were at length irrepressible. They were, therefore, impatient of delay, and were restrained, only by the dread of popular resentment, from carrying their murderous designs into immediate execution.

Intent on their main object, however, and unable to accomplish it by *direct* means, they had recourse to the base expedient of attempting to ensnare our Lord into a betrayal of such sentiments as should expose him to certain hazard. To artifices of this description they were not strangers: long experience had rendered them apt scholars in such attainments. In furtherance of their

cruel design, "they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor." As "the glory had departed from Israel, and the sceptre from Judah;" God's ancient heritage were at that time subject to a foreign jurisdiction. Grievous and revolting, however, as the acknowledgment of Roman superiority was to the peculiar people of Jehovah, even this was deemed a light matter, in comparison of their dislike to the Lord Jesus.

Various artful questions had been, on previous occasions, proposed for our Saviour's solution by the Jewish rulers and their emissaries. These had received answers, which, to every mind not absolutely "blinded by the god of this world," must have indicated the divine wisdom and authority of him who "spake as never man spake." But, the malevolent affections are so engrossed with the gratification of themselves, that they leave no place for dispassionate reflection. With melancholy fatuity, their possessors are neither admonished by past experience, nor regardful of future consequences. These disciples of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, although they differed essentially in their views respecting the justice of Cæsar's authority, nevertheless cordially agreed in their hatred of Christ; and, therefore, insidiously contrived, by an appearance of respect for his judgment and integrity, to accomplish his ruin. "They asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?" Verse 21, 22.

"If our Lord had asserted, on the one hand, that tribute was to be paid to Cæsar, the Pharisees, who generally maintained that such a subjection to a foreign power was inconsistent with the privileges of God's peculiar people, would have endeavoured to expose him to *popular resentment* as betraying the liberties of his country. On the other hand, had he denied the lawfulness of this tribute, the Herodians would have had a very plausible pretence of accusing him to the Roman power as a seditious person, which his persecutors had afterwards the assurance to do. Nay, perhaps, the very circumstance of taking upon him to determine such a question, might, by these insidious inquirers, be construed as a pretence to sovereignty."*

Our blessed Lord, who, "searcheth the heart and trieth the reins," perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, "Why tempt ye me? Show me a penny—whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's. And he said unto them, Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's." Verses 23—25. The profound wisdom and invulnerable principle of this reply filled them with consternation. "They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answer and held their peace." Verse 26.

You readily perceive that the examination of this portion of Sacred Scripture is hardly practicable without assuming an aspect in some measure political. It is, therefore, of high moment, that we should guard against the unfavourable influence of whatever predilections might mislead us from a fair and consistent interpretation of the Saviour's language. To render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's, are precepts enforced by the authority, and illustrated by the example of the Redeemer. They are not of local or temporary, but of general and permanent application. With the view of elucidating their import, we must betake ourselves to the volume of inspiration;—not to schools of secular politicians, by *whatever name* they prefer to be distinguished.

The world is, happily, to a great extent, relieved from the authority of mere names; and the more widely Christianity diffuses its benign influence, the less valuable will the watchwords of party appear.

We begin the exposition of the special command in verse 25, with the statement of a principle obviously involved in it, *That civil government is a divine institution appointed for the benefit of mankind.*

That this is the doctrine of Holy Scripture is evident, not only from its general tenor, but also from many direct averments. "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice." Prov. viii. 15. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore,

* Doddridge in loco.

resisteth the power, resisteth the *ordinance of God.*" Rom. xiii. 1, 2. Rulers are expressly called "the ministers of God." Rom. xiii. 4.

Of whatever limitation these passages admit, it cannot be deduced from them consistently with the established laws of interpretation, that the authority of the civil magistrate, whether supreme or subordinate, has in it no greater sacredness than those ordinary compacts which men form and dissolve by mutual pleasure. The institution of government is to be traced to the great Author of social order, stability, and happiness; and not, as has been frequently affirmed, to mere conventional expediency. It is hardly needful to remark, here, that the specific form of administration is not, with the exception of the Jewish polity, of divine origin. The source of civil authority *in the general*, is to be found in the fountain-head of all power; but the particular kind of government is, with infinite wisdom, intrusted to the ordinary principles which guide men in human affairs. Hence Christianity, without compromising either the letter or the spirit of her laws, inculcates the observance of political duties on mankind, whether under a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a body chosen by the people. Recognising civil government as a provision of God for the earthly welfare of his creatures, her province is to infuse into her own mild and equitable spirit: to inculcate alike on ruler and subjects "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

In these observations, let it not be supposed, that we hold the monstrous heresy of the "right divine to govern wrong," or maintain, that it is not allowable to use every constitutional mean of advancing national improvement. Perish the ungenerous thought, alike revolting to moral sensibility, and subversive of all true patriotism! The doctrine of unquestioning passive obedience, has found its abettors among tyrants and sycophants, but nothing so abhorrent from good sense and right principle is taught in the volume of inspiration. The service which *it* requires, is invariably a *reasonable service*—the willing tribute of the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. Any other species of subjection would manifestly strike at the root of government itself, by rendering that an instrument of sin and of wretchedness, which is graciously designed and adapted to be a provision for good. The duties obligatory on us, as subjects, are enjoined by the highest authority in the universe—by Him who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" but all of them, as we shall endeavour to show in the sequel, must harmonize with the laws of immutable truth and rectitude.

Having submitted to you the divine sanctions under which government is instituted, let us now consider the obligations which it requires.

I. The first is, *the paying of tribute: the support of civil authority with a reasonable portion of our substance.*

Whatever opinion be entertained as to the origin of government, all reasonable men are agreed respecting its necessity and importance. No state of society can be conceived more deplorable than one in which the will of the strongest is the law to others; in which physical force, or the caprice of arbitrary passion, tramples on the rights and comforts of humanity. That such effects flow from the want of civil government, is at once the deduction of reason and matter of historical fact. Whilst human nature retains its depravity, and is not restrained by moral considerations, civil laws invested with adequate sanctions, are indispensable to the protection of life, of property, and of whatever else man holds in estimation. Without such guardianship, all is anarchy, distraction, and exposure to every form of insult and aggression. But if civil government be thus an inestimable blessing, it is entitled to suitable support. The subjects of it are bound by every principle of duty, and of gratitude, to obey the divine command, "Render unto all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom." Nor can individuals exonerate themselves from this obligation, without thereby evincing their disregard alike of scriptural authority and scriptural example; without virtually declaring that they *are not disciples* of the Lord and Saviour, and without direct infringement of the most obvious principles of order and rectitude.

A remarkable exemplification of Christ's respect for the pecuniary maintenance of civil government occurs, Matthew xvii. 24. in fin. "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute

money, came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom, or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers. Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend (scandalize) them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

The duty of paying tribute for the support of government, is thus distinctly established by Scripture proof. On this point, as on the former, no specific rules are given. These are wisely left to be determined by particular exigencies; but, excepting cases of urgent necessity, none can justly plead an exemption from their share of public dues. And, as the revenue of every government must be proportioned to its necessary expenditure, he who either refuses to render tribute, or who dexterously evades the law, is guilty, in the sight of God, of an act of public depredation. All are indebted to the administration by which they are protected, and all, therefore, are bound to maintain its resources according to their ability.

II. *We ought to render to civil government honour and allegiance.*

The following are some of the express commands of the Almighty on this point. "Thou shalt not revile the gods (magistrates), nor curse the ruler of thy people." Exod. xxii. 28. "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change." Prov. xxiv. 21. "Honour all men. Fear God. Honour the king." 1 Peter ii. 17. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." Rom. xiii. 1—6. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." Titus iii. 1.

From these passages, and others which might be cited, the duty of rendering honour and allegiance unto kings and rulers is incontestably apparent. Nor can it be justly maintained, that this obligation is merely the result of conventional agreement, as certain political moralists have affirmed. If we obey only for "wrath's sake"—in other words, if our respect and submission be not conscientiously and cordially rendered—we oppose the whole spirit and tendency of such scriptural precepts. To honour and obey civil government is a branch of christian ethics, and like every other department of that incomparable code of duty, is enforced by the holy and immutable sanctions of the supreme Legislator.

Government is, with the explanation previously given, a *divine ordinance;* and, although certain emergencies may arise in which disobedience becomes the duty of subjects, still the great general principle is, we apprehend, untouched, *that it possesses claims on our respect and allegiance as government, independently of the characters of those by whom it is administered.*

If occasional maladministration were a sufficient reason for withholding honour and allegiance, the Christians of the apostolic age ought above all men to have claimed and received such exemption. The rulers under whom their lot was cast, were, both as men and as magistrates, entitled to no respect apart from that which belonged to their official trust: nay, in many instances, they acted in direct opposition to the civil interests, not only of their christian, but even of their heathen subjects. Where shall we ever discover names which awaken more promptly the feelings of virtuous indignation than those of Tiberius and Nero? And yet in behalf of their administrations, respect and obedience are unequivocally exacted. But Christians were the minority, it has been alleged in reply, and resistance would have been, therefore, alike ineffectual and unwise. We admit the premises, but deny the validity of the conclusion. Had resistance been their duty, it would have been clearly and fearlessly enjoined. He

whose part it is to deliver, whether "by many or by few," would, if the principles of his moral government had not been opposed to such expedients, have never allowed the pages of inspiration to record as lessons obligatory on *all* ages what were merely designed for the early Christians. We have yet to learn by what authority independently of God himself, this restriction of Scripture to special exigencies is supported. Wherever particular limitations are used, of these notice is given either by the context or by the connexion of the passage with other portions of sacred Writ. But, in reference to those on which our argument is founded, no restrictions are specified; *one always excepted*, that the antecedent claims of God in his eternal law of rectitude must never be infringed. "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, *and unto God the things which be God's.*"

Whilst a Christian, therefore, ought, in the spirit, and agreeably to the example of Christ, to endure much and even to "suffer wrongfully," *as to his temporal estate*, rather than to take the sword of retribution into his own hand; the same principle of obedience to the divine authority will preserve him from all tampering with the things of God. The rights of conscience, as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, are what the world can neither give nor take away, and these, it is, accordingly, his sacred duty to maintain at whatever expense of personal hazard. It is, hence apparent, that, although respect and allegiance are obligatory on subjects even under laws, the constitution or executive administration of which may be conscientiously disapproved, the obedience for which we contend must never interfere with the full exercise of our reason and our conscience *in matters of religion*. With this limitation, it is no breach of charity to observe, that the christian faith abjures all communion with that unfeeling asperity with which civil rulers are often ungratefully abused, by certain heartless pretenders to political purity;—all communion with that intolerance of party spirit, on either side, which excludes from its regards all who dissent from its domination;—all communion with those extravagant notions which some entertain as to the power of *any system* of human policy, however excellent in itself, or by whomsoever administered, to complete the happiness of a nation. Descended from Heaven, the imperishable guardian of order and excellence, Christianity unites in bonds of mutual dependence all classes of the body politic;—is at once the poor man's best friend, and the instructor of princes:—subordinates to her high purposes the existing framework of human establishments, and authoritatively demands for Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and for God the things which be God's. Her language respecting these who with reckless audacity would sport with any department of duty is that of the Patriarch, "My soul come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

III. *We ought to pray with earnestness and frequency for the government and rulers of our country.*

When we consider the entire dependence of all human counsels and measures on the direction and blessing of God, in order that they may prove beneficial, the importance of prayer will appear in a light equally strong and attractive. The more elevated the condition of men, and the more arduous their duties, the greater are their responsibility and their consequent need of divine guidance and aid. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James i. 17. It is matter of serious apprehension that, by many, prayer for those in situations of authority is regarded too much as a customary form; forgetful, that nothing can prosper without the accompanying influence of Heaven. All ideas of possible benefit from any human institution are vain and presumptuous, unless God impart *his* enriching blessing. Let none amongst us conceive that the only, or the main use of prayer, is its benign effect upon the mind of the suppliant. It is the divinely appointed channel through which we are authorized to expect the fulfilment of God's promises, either to individuals or to collective bodies. You might, therefore, as reasonably expect to behold the earth clothed in brightness and verdure without the influences of the risen sun and the refreshing showers, as to witness national prosperity apart from the fulfilment of prayer. The divine purposes, it is true, are altogether independent on human means, either as to their origin or their success; but whenever these purposes materially affect the welfare of mankind, it is a principle of Scripture, that for all these

things "God will be inquired of to do it for them." Hence the ineffable value of prayer that He, in whom all fulness dwells, may endow "kings, and all that are in authority," with requisite gifts and graces, and may render their government a salutary mean of establishing and extending the interests of peace, of righteousness, and of human felicity. Whilst secular politicians never ascend higher in their designs of national good than to the resources of creative wisdom and power, the Christian follows the example of those holy patriots who traced the stability and enlargement of national blessings to the Lord their God.

How memorable David's prayer for Solomon, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." Psalm lxxii. 1—5. In exact accordance with these supplications is the language of Paul: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 1—5.

If such precepts and examples were duly influential, we should, without the slightest presumption, expect a greatly augmented share of national tranquillity and happiness. Men would learn to express their political views with moderation, candour, and forbearance. They would be disposed to make much larger allowances for the force of early and long cherished associations in their opponents than they usually manifest. Instead of the intemperate virulence of faction exemplified often in contemptuous epithets and uncharitable judgments; instead of the blind servility of ignorance and meanness; or the incessant murmuring of those who "despise dominion and speak evil of dignities;" there would be manifested a spirit of dependence on, and sympathy with, that "wisdom that is from above; wisdom first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." James iii. 17.

Having submitted to your consideration various duties obligatory on us as subjects of civil government, it is of importance to notice the connexion in which they are brought forward; as this serves both to define their extent and enforce their application. What mankind owe to the Supreme Being is of primary and unspeakable moment. He is the source of all authority, whether possessed by private individuals or by public bodies. "Power belongeth unto God," as its uncreated and eternal residence. "The bosom of Jehovah is the seat of law," and whatever, therefore, is not in unison with his revealed will, ought to be invariably withstood. To comply with requisitions which the divine law prohibits, or to abstain from what it expressly enjoins, can never be the duty of a creature *in any circumstances*.

No human authority can either annul or alter moral obligation, which is immutable as its celestial source, and must be sacredly recognised, should all the powers of the created universe combine to set it aside. Nor is there the slightest discrepancy betwixt this view of the obedience of subjects and that which has been advanced in an earlier part of the discourse. For who does not perceive that the duties of mankind to constituted authorities, as being the ordinance of God, and the refusal of obedience to *unscriptural* commands, are emanations of the same great principle of allegiance to the divine law? If government be, as was stated, of heavenly appointment, it cannot, justly, demand, and ought not to expect from its subject compliance beyond the point at which Deity proclaims, "Hitherto shalt thou go but no farther." This point, even the enlightened and conscientious may be sometimes unable to ascertain with absolute precision; but without embarrassing our minds amidst nice and subtle refinements of casuistry, it approves itself to reason that no administration has a right to allegiance when it perverts its power of doing good into an instrument of religious despotism. The existence of government implies mutual duties incumbent alike on rulers and the governed; and, although particular civil acts, sufficiently obnoxious, must sometimes be endured, even for conscience' sake, and the christian subject, with all the "meek-

ness of wisdom," will in such cases simply refer his cause to Him who hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," the same extent of submission would be plainly sinful whenever the attempt should be made to fetter the conscience towards God.

On this principle we are satisfied that the struggles of our revered forefathers admit of christian vindication. Their conflicts even unto death, were, with few exceptions, conflicts for self-preservation and for religious freedom. That civil questions mingled, in certain cases with the higher question of man's unalienable right to worship God agreeably to conscience and Scripture, is not matter of amazement. They lived in most perilous times, and, if they exceeded in some few instances the limits within which divine Revelation has confined us, ordinary candour will ascribe this to no design, on their part, of hostile aggression. Oppression maketh even wise men mad, and such oppression what language can describe in terms sufficiently strong!

Of the manifest duty of Christians to refuse obedience to commands which preclude the rendering unto God the things which be God's, a notable example occurs in the conduct of Peter and John, towards the persecuting rulers who endeavoured to interdict them in their Master's work.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem: and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor to teach, in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts iv. 13—21.

It is thus manifest that the religious belief and worship of individuals, whenever these do not endanger the social weal by leading to overt acts of rebellion, are beyond the jurisdiction of any authority merely human. In the determination of these weighty matters, "He who judgeth us is the Lord:" to Him alone we are accountable, and no civil tribunal is morally competent to interfere. Attempts to prescribe the doctrines which we shall receive, or the modes of worship to which we shall conform, are as oppressive as they are unsuccessful. The civil magistrate ought, doubtless, to be the protector and the patron of Christianity, both on account of its own intrinsic excellence, and in consideration of the stability which it gives to government for the benefit of all classes. Kings are never more highly to be honoured than when they are the nursing fathers, nor queens than when they are nursing mothers of the Church of God. Their elevation to such distinction is one which even angels delight to contemplate, for they are all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. But whilst the protection and support of government are never more beneficially employed than in relation to the christian faith —that divine source of all private and national virtue—that exclusive inspirer of the righteousness which exalteth a nation—beyond this the power of human laws does not justly extend. "My kingdom," saith our Lord, "is not of this world:" *its* authority reaches even to the hidden man of the heart; and regarding this, Omniscience alone is qualified to form a decided estimate, and to pronounce a sentence of approval or of condemnation. But although the kingdom of Christ disclaims the imposition of secular laws as affecting either its principles or its administration, its subjects will suffer the word of exhortation whilst they are reminded of their privileges, their obligations, and their dangers, as citizens of earth, during their preparation for a higher and an enduring world.

1. Let Christians express and evince their thankfulness for national privileges. Did the blessed Saviour inculcate the duty of rendering unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and become himself willingly subject to foreign jurisdiction, although every method was adopted to ensnare and destroy him:—although the protection afforded to the vilest malefactors was to be denied, and his innocent blood was to flow as a memo-

rial of the most flagrant injustice? Did the Apostles of the Lord, whilst they knew that bonds and imprisonment, tortures and death awaited them—nay, after sharp and repeated persecutions, inculcate, notwithstanding, subordination to government as the ordinance of God? What, then, is the duty of christian subjects in this highly favoured land—a land in which we sit under our vine and our fig-tree, none making us afraid;—a land in which the principles of revealed religion are not merely tolerated, but an established provision made for their stability and diffusion;—a land, the institutions of which are interwoven with the avowal of Christ's kingly authority;—and in which the ordinances of Christianity are becoming gradually more accessible by all classes? In such circumstances, what British heart does not respond to the feelings of ancient Israel, "Truly the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places: we have a goodly heritage." May the blessing of the God of nations be ever our portion: may our judges be ever just, and our exactors righteous. May Jehovah abundantly bless the provision of Zion, and satisfy her poor with bread. May He also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. Our gratitude for national privileges will be most satisfactorily evinced by

2. A practical regard to every christian and moral obligation.

A feeling of self-gratulation is apt to spread its illusory influence over our minds whilst we think and speak of our civil and religious advantages. The acknowledged pre-eminence of this country in arts and in arms; in commercial, intellectual, and moral power; in rational and christian liberty, has frequently afforded matter of proud exultation, as if *for our righteousness' sake* the Lord had thus distinguished us among the nations. Visions of British glory have been the theme of the poet's song, and of the patriot's rejoicing. The fame of our land has gone forth, even to the end of the world. A more temperate and chastened joy would have been befitting; for we should have faithfully inquired, What have we rendered unto the Lord for all his benefits? What has been the return of our hearts to Him who has crowned us with loving kindness and tender mercies? Have we been rendered more humble by the reflection that God alone hath made us to differ?—more vigilant in our resistance against those sins which are the disgrace and ruin of a people?—more sedulous in the cultivation of those habits and virtues which constitute the only test of national character? Have we rendered unto God the things which be God's? Have we yielded ourselves to Him in our understandings, that He might enlighten them by his Word and Spirit;—in our affections, that He might reign with moral supremacy over us;—in our relationships, that He might hallow them with his blessing;—in our property, that He might be glorified by our promotion alike of the temporal and spiritual interests of our fellow-subjects, and of the general family of mankind;—in our *all*, as being persuaded that whatever we possess is of God, to whom be glory and dominion for ever? These inquiries claim our immediate and most serious regard. They are not matters of trivial or evanescent interest, but vast and solemn in their present and future bearings: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

That we may be incited to the diligent performance of such duties, let the subject be improved with the view of

3. Reminding Christians of their dangers. Amidst the conflicting interests and powerful allurements of this life, the concerns of futurity often suffer. The hazard of sacrificing the rights of God for the gratification of temporary pleasures is great and imminent. In civil polity no question has more frequently exercised the ingenuity of statesmen than the best method of preserving the balance of power. There is another balance which is incomparably more difficult of adjustment. In one scale are the concerns of time, in the other those of eternity; and the most momentous of all inquiries is, which is likely to preponderate? The honours and opulence of the most splendid earthly condition will assuredly profit us nothing if we lose our own souls. The most praiseworthy acts of allegiance to our king and our rulers will be worse than useless if we neglect the great salvation. One of the most striking proofs of the divine origin of the christian revelation is the uncompromising fidelity with which it enumerates and enforces our various personal and social duties. Another evidence of its supreme authority and excellence may be observed in the perfect harmony which subsists among all its requisitions. One order

of duties is never allowed to interfere with others. As devotion towards God is fanaticism whenever we exclude our fellow-creatures from our regards, so the most fervent loyalty will not compensate for the absence nor for the partial influence of vital godliness. Hence, brethren, that allegiance is uniformly most stable and consistent, which begins with a clear and settled recognition of the authority of God. The man who honours not the King of kings, who obeys not the voice of the Lord, and of the Saviour whom He hath sent, may arrogate the name of a patriot, but the elements of genuine patriotism are wanting. Self-interest, vanity, early prejudices, or some other influence, may have determined his adoption of a certain political creed, and secured his unvarying adherence to it. But he is the real lover of his country and the best subject of government, who supports, honours, and obeys, in all lawful matters, from an enlightened regard to the will of Jehovah. Amidst the fluctuations of a scene in which he feels himself to be a stranger and a sojourner, he discharges the duties of his place and station with the spirit of a citizen of Heaven. He receives with gratitude the security afforded for his present well-being in the provisions of civil administration, and strives to evince the reality and the depth of this affection, by rendering unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

Finally. Let rulers and subjects steadfastly unite in christian and patriotic exertions for the promotion of their country's weal.

Wherever the heart is impressed with a proper sense of obligation to God, it delights to devise liberal things for the happiness of man. Our natural selfishness, indeed, frequently interposes between our convictions of duty and its faithful discharge; and even Christians, who, in their best estate on earth, are sanctified *only in part*, have abundant cause of humiliation when they faithfully inquire, "What do ye more than others?" How few regard influence, property, talents, and other means of usefulness, as sacred trusts, for the improvement of which God will exact a minute account! If we habitually realized the prospect of our final reckoning, we should have a far more elevated view of our several stewardships; and be mainly solicitous to "occupy until our Lord come." Instead of asking, with cold and calculating selfishness, *how few sacrifices* of personal ease or comfort may be made by us for the sake of others, without endangering our hope of future happiness; it would yield the purest gratification on this side heaven to be fellow-workers with God in rectifying the evils and enlarging the joys of mankind. The "pomp and circumstance" of worldly station would be considered as altogether a vulgar thing, in comparison of the power of alleviating the distresses of even one sufferer in this vale of trial. Of what account are your treasures of gold and silver unless they be expended on objects which tend to ameliorate and improve the race to which you belong? Will it afford you satisfaction in the hour of death, to reflect that God bestowed on you the most ample means of augmenting the happiness, bodily, mental, and spiritual, of his creatures—but that you regarded personal indulgence as man's chief good? Be assured, that you are not rendering either to human or divine authority the obligations of a Christian, unless you employ every practicable mean of conferring substantial benefit on your country. If you use not the influence committed to you in whatever sphere Providence has appointed your lot, for *doing good unto all men as ye have opportunity*;—diffusing the blessings of christianity, of civilization, and of general benevolence; instruction to "the ignorant, and those that are out of the way;" relief to the indigent; liberty to the oppressed; and consolation to the mourner;—then, be your declarations of respect for civil authority as explicit and numerous as possible, it is not from such patriots that Britain may expect either help amidst her dangers, or moral glory as her noblest distinction on the pages of her future history.

NO FLESH JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW;

A LECTURE,

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"*Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*"—ROMANS iii. 19—23.

THE Apostle here introduces the law as a person addressing all who were under it, compelling them to confess their guilt, and to cease objecting against its righteous requirements, or just the rigorous exaction of the threatened penalty. Many who profess to explain the Scriptures, endeavour to persuade themselves and others, that the Apostle all along in this Epistle, when he speaks of the law, only intends the ceremonial law; and by this fancy attempt to elude the force of the Apostle's doctrine, that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law. Now, in direct opposition to this fancy, the Apostle tells us, that the law of which he speaks stops every mouth, and proclaims all men guilty before God, in consequence of their disobedience to its requirements. Now, the ceremonial law could not stop every mouth; it never was binding on all, and it is now, and has long since been abrogated. It is then perfectly evident, that it is the moral law to which the Apostle here refers, and under which all men by nature are, and which addresses itself to all. All men are under obligations to obey the law, and all who are disobedient to its requirements are condemned by it. The children of God themselves were under the law in their unconverted state; and now even the law, as a rule of life, speaks to them, and binds them to obedience; not, indeed, by threatenings of eternal wrath, but from love to Christ, and a desire to be conformed to his image. So that the law speaks to all here this day; it condemns every sinner out of Christ; it follows him wherever he goes; it judges all his actions; it goes with him into the family circle, and takes cognizance of him in all the various relations of life; it follows him into his closet, and there notes what his conduct and language are before God. Yea, it goes farther still; it looks into the heart, and condemns every sinful, unscriptural thought or motion of the mind. It presents itself to every Christian here, to show him his sins and short-comings; to point out to him the path of duty, and calls upon and commands him, as a follower of Christ, to forsake sin; and, from principle of spiritual life and love, to yield a sincere and willing obedience in every duty. In this view it is, we see, of great importance for men to know whether they are still under the law as a covenant of works, or whether they are delivered from the curse threatened against every transgressor. Without this we can neither understand the Scriptures nor scriptural preaching: it appears to us a mass of confusion, whilst in itself clear, distinct, and precise. It farther appears from Scripture, that when the commandment comes with power, men become persuaded of their guilt before God, and are no longer ready to exclaim, as in the days of their ignorance, against the justice of that sentence of condemnation which the law pronounces—justly pronounces against them.

From this it appears evident, as the Apostle tells us in the 20th verse, that we cannot possibly obtain justification by the deeds of the law. The law, instead of jus-

tifying the sinner, condemns Him; for it is by the law that he is led to see himself guilty, and the impossibility of being justified by it; for he wants that righteousness which the law requires, and is found guilty before God of many and grievous violations of the law; indeed, where there is no law, there is no transgression, when men shut their eyes on their duty, and refuse to attend to the requirements of the law, they may be said to have no law but their own passions, and prejudices, and sinful propensities, and therefore they indulge in sin without restraint and without fear of future consequences. How otherwise could men who have the Bible in their hands, allow themselves in the daily commission of sin, and violate without restraint all the laws of their God. It is evident, then, that they who act thus are even more wicked than the heathen, and fully as ignorant of God's law; and that however they may now boast themselves in mischief and in ill, that they shall not always be permitted to act thus, nor remain always ignorant of God's law, nor of its fearful sanction; for in that day, when the books shall be opened, the book of God's law shall no longer remain shut, but to the terror of the ungodly shall be set before them in so clear a light, that they shall no longer be able to remain ignorant of the requirements of God's most holy law.

Verse 21. The Apostle having proved all men unrighteous, and that no such thing as a perfect or justifying righteousness was to be found among men, and aware at the same time that without righteousness there could be no salvation, leads us to view that righteousness by which men are justified. This righteousness, to distinguish it from human righteousness, he calls the righteousness of God. It is not only such a righteousness as God approves and accepts; but, in virtue of the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of our surety, it is properly called the righteousness of God, as it consists of the perfect obedience, active and passive, to the whole will of God—of Him who is styled the Lord our righteousness—of Him who is God in our nature; of course it bears the stamp of divinity, being not only perfect, but magnifying the law and making it honourable. Now, this righteousness so plainly revealed in the Gospel, is not opposed to the law and the prophets, though manifested without the law—the law having no hand in its procurement or manifestation. The law, indeed, shows what righteousness is, but it does not direct the sinner where this righteousness is to be found; it shows him his want of it, and the fearful consequences of this want; but there it leaves him to death and despair, till the Gospel interposes and speaks peace. Yet both the law and the prophets, when this righteousness is revealed, bear their testimony in its favour. They tell us of its manifestation, of its author, excellency and efficacy, and plainly convince us that in the Lord alone we have righteousness and strength, verses 22, 23. He repeats the appellation he had formerly given to that righteousness of which he speaks as a justifying righteousness, and explains to us how it is apprehended and made effectual in its application to us; and here it is proper we distinguish aright, else we may run into greater errors than those we try to avoid. Some speak as if they supposed that faith justified, whereas faith is in us imperfect—it is a fruit of the spirit, and posterior in order of nature to our justification before God; in a word, neither faith, nor love, nor holiness is any part of our justifying righteousness, for this would only be putting down the doctrine of human merit with the one hand, and raising it up with the other. The law condemns us as guilty, and ere it ceases to condemn must be satisfied, must have a perfect righteousness, and this can only be found in Christ. Faith is not that righteousness; yea, it neither wrought out nor merits it; it is only the instrument on our part whereby we receive Christ, and rest upon him as the Lord our righteousness. By faith this righteousness is apprehended, and it is free to all who believe. There is no difference before God in regard to one sinner, or one sect, or one nation, more than another; they have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and thus are all guilty before God, and therefore exposed to condemnation; so that in regard to any claim or title to the friendship and favour of God there was no difference, all were equally vile and unworthy; and yet there is nothing more common than to see proud worms of the dust making a difference, and exalting themselves above their fellow-worms, as if they deserved deliverance from condemnation, and were more worthy of the love of God than others. But here all

sinners are put on a level, and there is no difference but what God makes, when, in the exercise of his sovereignty, one is taken and another left. This doctrine is, indeed, grating to proud and self-righteous men; but it is the doctrine of the Bible, and by it we must stand or fall at last. But while this doctrine is calculated to humble the proud and haughty sinner, it is calculated to afford special comfort to Christ's poor afflicted ones; for here they see that while all are esteemed guilty, yet it is from among these guilty ones, who have nothing to recommend them to the favour of God, that these vessels of mercy are taken. The righteousness here spoken of is offered to all; it is sufficient for all, and all stand in need of it. Whatever difference you or others may see with regard to the extent of your guilt, and your being a greater sinner than others, God sees none; and he strives to convince you of sin, and bring you in guilty before God, that you may see your need of this righteousness, and not rest satisfied until you have obtained the pardon of sin and grace to help in every time of need.

GLORY TO GOD.

God! Everlasting Father! Holy One!
Our God, our Father, our Eternal All!
Source whence we came, and whither we return;
Who made our spirits, who our bodies made,
Who made the heaven, who made the flowery land,
Who made all made, who orders, governs all,
Who walks upon the wind, who holds the wave
In hollow of thy hand, whom thunders wait,
Whom tempests serve, whom flaming fires obey,
Who guides the circuit of the endless years,
And sits on high, and makes creation's top
Thy footstool, and beholds, below Thee, all—
All nought, all less than nought, and vanity.
Like transient dust that hovers on the scale,
Ten thousand worlds are scattered in thy breath.
Thou sitt'st on high, and measur'st destinies,
And days, and months, and wide revolving years;
And dost according to thy holy will;
And none can stay thy hand, and none withhold
Thy glory; for in judgment, Thou, as well
As mercy, art exalted, day and night.
Past, present, future, magnify thy name;
Thy works all praise Thee, all thy angels praise;
Thy saints adore, and on thy altars burn
The fragrant incense of perpetual love.
They praise Thee now, their hearts, their voices praise,
And swell the rapture of the glorious song.
Harp! lift thy voice on high! shout, angels, shout!
And loudest, ye redeemed! Glory to God,
And to the Lamb who bought us with his blood,
From every kindred, nation, people, tongue;
And washed, and sanctified, and saved our souls;
And gave us robes of linen pure, and crowns
Of life, and made us kings and priests to God.
Shout back to ancient Time! Sing loud, and wave
Your palms of triumph! Sing, Where is thy sting,
O Death! where is thy victory, O Grave!
Thanks be to God, eternal thanks, who gave
Us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Harp! lift thy voice on high! shout, angels, shout!
And loudest, ye redeemed! Glory to God,
And to the Lamb, all glory and all praise,
All glory and all praise, at morn and even,
That come and go eternally, and find
Us happy still, and Thee for ever blest!
Glory to God and to the Lamb. Amen.
For ever, and for evermore. Amen.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT CAMERON, East-Kilbride.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BRODIE, A.M., Glasgow.
LECTURE by the Rev. DAVID CARMENT, A.M., Ross-keen.

CHRIST REMEMBERED AT HIS TABLE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, EAST KILBRIDE, ON THE MORNING OF SABBATH, 8TH FEBRUARY, 1835,

By the Rev. ROBERT CAMERON

East Kilbride.

"*This do in remembrance of me.*"—1 COR. xi. 24.

SOME of the most deeply affecting hours we know are those, in which our feelings are wrought upon by our remembrance of the events that are past; when the fled enjoyments of former days rise up in review before our memories, as if but to torture us with the recollection that they are gone for ever. This is particularly the case when recollection, painful and unsought, brings before us the remembrance of those we loved in former years, but whose forms have been long shrouded from our view in the oblivious gloom of the grave; for it is indeed true, that, in after days, ay, even when many years have passed away, busy meddling memory, herein, alas! but too faithful to its trust, will call them back to our view with surprising vividness; they seem to stand at our side as once they did; they appear even to address us; and the long-unheard tones of their well-remembered voices seem to penetrate our ears, and we hold conference with them as in the days of old. But how much is this recollection strengthened when aided by the sight of something they have presented to us, and commanded us to cherish and preserve as a memorial of them. It meets the sight; the eye rests upon it; the present seems to vanish, the past to return; all the scene, as when the memorial was presented, is again visible, and we feel but too sensibly the loss we experienced in our friend's removal. Much of what he said, much of what he did, much of what we enjoyed with him, arises on our thoughts; and though it is but as a dream that passeth away, yet, for the moment, the end has been attained—our friend is remembered. These thoughts have a close connexion with our text. To correct the forgetfulness of our minds, and from time to time to bring to our souls the remembrance of his love to us, as displayed in the glorious work of redemption which he effected for us, as well as the affection with which he still regards us, and at the same time to impress on our minds the duty of returning that love, our blessed Redeemer, ere he left our world, instituted the simple, but impressive ordinance we are this day met to observe, and by his Apostle, speaking in the text, tells us the object designed by it, when he says, "This do in remembrance of me."

No one who has at all seriously reflected on the subject can for a moment imagine, that all designed by the blessed Saviour, in the command given his people in the text, was merely the recollection that he did for a season live in this our lower world. It evidently refers to some particular aspects in which we are to contemplate him while observing the ordinance. Indeed, the language used by the Saviour, whether recorded by the Evangelists or this Apostle, shows plainly that it was to be observed by his genuine people in every succeeding age, in remembrance of him as a Saviour, to recall to their minds a sense of his infinite love to them as a Redeemer, and to be attended to by them with this design, one generation after another, till they should all be removed to enjoy that higher communion with him

which he himself had promised, under the metaphor of drinking new wine with him in the everlasting kingdom of God. Our object in the present discourse, therefore, is to bring before you a few of the remembrances of Christ, which you should cherish while seated around his table.

1. Remember your guilt, pollution and wretchedness, which rendered his interference for your deliverance so absolutely necessary. It was the fallen state of our nature which required a Saviour should be provided, and rendered it necessary that Saviour should die; for so inveterate in its malignity was the guilt of man, that no sacrifice he himself could make, however anxious he might be for it, was of value sufficient to atone for even a small part of the heavy amount of transgression with which he was chargeable at the bar of a pure and holy Judge. In this hapless, and apparently hopeless condition, the great Redeemer, while seated with the Father on the throne of his glory, saw and pitied us. This pity induced him to undertake the work of our recovery; and as he voluntarily became the Father's servant, proclaimed the glorious tidings, saying, "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God." When, therefore, we do this in remembrance of Christ, we cannot but remember, at the same time, how overwhelming was the necessity which required his aid. Was there ever a time when you were attacked by a deadly disease, at that time was a physician called to your aid, and when your life was in danger, by the skilful manner in which he treated the disease became the means of your recovery; you would think of him, nor when thinking of him could you fail to think of the peril in which your lives were placed when his aid was so opportunely sought? So when we think of the Saviour, and call to remembrance the deliverance which he effected for us, can we forget the sins from the punishment due to which he saved us. No, that cannot be; and when they rise in vivid remembrance to our minds, they will unquestionably beget in our souls one of those sacred feelings which are truly characteristic of the followers of the Lamb that was slain, penitential grief; for we cannot do otherwise than mourn over that evil thing which, in our deliverance from it, cost so much agony and so much wo to him, who has commanded, "This do in remembrance of me."

2. Remember the amazing magnitude of that love and compassion which induced him to undertake our cause. Truly the motive which induced him, whom we this day call to mind to interfere in our behalf, must have been of the most benevolent character. There was not any thing in us which could have claimed the bestowal of the favour, nor could we ever pay him any remuneration for the arduous work which he effected for us. From motives of the purest, the most exalted benevolence, he undertook our cause and secured our redemption. He has no other reward; he seeks no other reward than the satisfaction which flows into his own blessed bosom—from a contemplation of the boundless happiness which has already resulted, and which shall yet result to thousands of the human race from his gracious exertions in their behalf. In that result he sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied. Who, then, is there so devoid of feeling as to take into his hands the simple emblems of bread and wine, as to eat of that bread and drink of that cup, and not at the same time remember that he is commemorating the greatest manifestation of compassion and love that ever was displayed to the universe. Sitting at his table with these memorials in his hands and at his lips, must not the Christian be convinced, that in him whom they bring to his remembrance he has a friend sincere and changeless; that in him, at least, he has found one whose affection may be confidently relied on—a friend whose anxiety for his welfare is as boundless in its extent as the efforts he made to secure that welfare were great. When, therefore, in compliance with his dying commands, we attend on the sacramental feast, strangely constituted, indeed, must our minds be if the ejaculation of our souls be not such as these! Whom, O blessed Redeemer, shall we remember if we forget thee, or what can ever occupy our thoughts if we cherish not the remembrance of thy love! O! thou great Restorer of the lost hopes and ruined prospects of mankind, let thy infinite compassion and boundless love be ever before our eyes, as the great source of our soul's comfort while in the present world, and the sure foundation on which to rest our hopes of that which is to come; that so remembering thee in this manner, our souls may be excited to high and adoring feelings of the most ardent gratitude, and flow out in songs of loftiest praise.

3. Remember the holiness of the doctrines which he taught, and the purifying tendency of the precepts which he inculcated. In

order to a proper remembrance of Christ, we must call him before our minds, not in one aspect only, but in all the fulness of his mediatorial character; and we must unquestionably remember him as our instructor, as well as our propitiation. It is, indeed, a vile slander that wicked, infidel men, would proclaim against the Gospel, against salvation by the death of Christ; and which hypocrites, by their deceitful conduct, seem to confirm, when they represent it as conducing to and encouraging in sin. No; the errand on which Christ came was not only, that fallen man might be saved from condemnation, but made holy. The whole of his public life was spent in administering instruction of this tendency to those who surrounded him; and it must be obvious to every reader, that the whole of his discourses are stamped with such a decidedly practical character, that if the advices and instructions contained in them were but attended to by his professed disciples, this world would soon become a scene of love We, it is true, do not, like the first disciples, hear him deliver these discourses personally; but we have means of grace given us to supply the want of his bodily presence, and may, by a perusal of our Saviour's words recorded to us in the sacred Scriptures, accompanied by the promised influence of his Spirit, acquire all that knowledge of them which is requisite to enable us beneficially to remember them while meditating on him at his table. These must form part of our remembrances there, and it will have a powerful tendency to render us better and happier men. When, therefore, we approach him at a communion table, remembering the doctrines which he taught, we must remember at the same time that we are not approaching one on whose brow indifference to humanity ever sat; but, on the contrary, one who knows our weakness; who loves us with the greatest affection; who, in the pure doctrines and precepts which he has given us, is ever designing the advancement of our best interests—one who never frowned on the genuine penitent, whether kneeling at his footstool, penitentially confessing his sin, or seated at his table, joyfully commemorating his love, and who never uttered one word of condemnation, except (and, I pray you, mark the exception; for it is, indeed, an awful one) only on the hypocrite, the designing, wilful, malicious and cold-blooded hypocrite.

4. Remember the sufferings he underwent, and the death he endured for you This is unquestionably the principal object to be remembered at his table; and one, forgetting which, our attendance there would be but solemn mockery; for these symbols presented to your view there are specially designed to remind you of the excruciating nature of the sufferings to which he submitted, and the agonizing character of the death which he died; and when in a proper spirit we eat of that bread and drink of that cup, we are expressly told, that thereby we show forth the Lord's death. When, therefore, we are at the Lord's table; when we there see the emblems of his broken body and shed blood, surely they will forcibly bring to our remembrance all the sufferings he bore for us, and they will come before us clearly and pointedly as if they had been depicted in rays of light. In these circumstances, there will rise to our remembrance a view of those sufferings which he endured for us in his body, when he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. We will be reminded of the hunger, the thirst, and all the destitution which he experienced. We will be reminded how he was betrayed by one disciple, one who called himself a friend, and denied by another who had solemnly declared he would die with him rather than forsake him. We will be reminded how he was apprehended, arraigned, and condemned; how he was scourged and spit upon; how, as if an outcast from society, he was hurried beyond the walls of the city to expire in lingering tortures on the ignominious cross, placed between malefactors. There, too, will be brought to our remembrance these still more agonizing sorrows which he endured in his soul. We will be reminded how that soul was heavy and troubled when made an offering for sin; words those of awful import, who can understand their full meaning. We will be reminded how, when conflicting for us with the enemies of our souls, his soul became exceeding sorrowful, sorrowful even unto death; so that thrice with strong crying and tears he prayed to the Father, that if possible the cup might pass from him; and we will be reminded of that inconceivable woe which he endured when, for the first time, he experienced that bitter desertion, which made him exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There, too, will a remembrance of the causes of this scene of desertion and distress come before us. Yes! with the remembrance of the bitter anguish and agony which the Saviour

endured, will come a conviction of the glorious and heart-cheering truth that it was for our salvation he thus agonized and died; blessed truth! he loved us and gave himself for us; blessed truth! he laid down his life that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. Oh! surely these things cannot fail to form part of the remembrances, which will arise in our minds at the time we are obeying his dying command; and surely, while the remembrance of them cannot fail to excite in our bosoms deep emotions of grief—because they tell us forcibly the awful evil there is in sin, and deep emotions of love, because they tell us how great was that love which he felt for us—they cannot fail at the same time to excite in our hearts strong sensations of holy hatred against sin, and earnest, ardent desires so fully to be delivered from its power, that we may never more be guilty of crucifying him afresh, or putting him to an open shame by indulging in it.

5. Remember the position which he now occupies, and the glorious rewards which he has provided for all his faithful followers. Though, indeed, no longer sojourning here below, he has not in his present exalted state forgotten his people on earth, or withdrawn himself from an attention to what concerns their welfare. The heavens have now, indeed, received him from our sight, and he will not again personally revisit our world, till that important day when his Almighty voice shall utter the solemn declaration, "Behold! I make all things new;" yet in that blessed region where he now is, the paradise of God, of which Eden was but a figure, and where his human nature for ever united to the divine sits in all its glory on the throne with the Father, he is engaged in our behalf; for even on that throne he is still officiating as our great High Priest within the vail. There he is pleading our cause as our Advocate with the Father. Thence, as our exalted Head in whom all fulness resides, he is continually sending down to us the blessings of which we stand in need; for he is one who can sympathize with us in all our infirmities, knowing the aid which our weakness requires. There, entered as our forerunner, he is preparing a place for our reception. When the time of our removal hence shall arrive, and when he sits in majesty, our mighty Sovereign, by his providence, overruling the designs of our enemies, whether to us seen or secret, so causing them all to work for our good, and by his grace reigning in our hearts for completely subjecting them to his will, and assimilating our souls to his likeness. At his table, therefore, when complying with his dying command, we must think of him as enthroned in the realms of bliss, as gone home before us to his own house of many mansions above, for the express purpose of preparing for our reception, that in due time we may be with him where he is for ever. It is his promise that it shall be so, affording sufficient evidence that the Saviour is never tired of the company of his people, however much we at times may feel wearied in waiting on him. And, oh! while we think of the exalted majesty of this blessed One, and at his table remember the glorious work in which he is now engaged for our benefit, it will surely encourage us to believe confidently, that as he has gone to prepare a place for us, he will also prepare us for that place, and in due time admit us into it.

Such then, my brethren, are a few of the solemn remembrances which should come on our minds when commemorating the Saviour at his table. For the purpose of exciting these remembrances on the mind, this ordinance was instituted, that in it, while we eat of the bread, and drink of the wine, we might remember Christ; and most certainly, with such recollections rising in the soul, the table of Christ will be to the Christian a place of holy communion with his Redeemer—a place of which he will be ever ready to say, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Let all those, therefore, who desire in a proper manner to remember Christ, come to his table. But who should come? Let the Psalmist answer the question. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he that back-biteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour; nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear God; he that sweareth to his hurt, and changeth not. Such is the description which the Psalmist gives of the character of those who shall approach God with acceptance on earth and in heaven; and with such a plain description before us, can we be at any loss to discover who should not come to the table of the Lord, and who should come?

Come not ye who, as yet, have felt no

emotions of godly sorrow on account of past sin or present infirmity. What have ye, self-righteous ones, to do with the memory of a dying Saviour? Ye seem to say ye need him not; ye trust in yourselves for salvation; how, then, can ye remember him in a proper manner? He calls not you, he calls sinners to repentance; and he calls only penitent sinners to his table. Ye say ye need not a physician; why, then, pretend to come to him who heals souls? Come not ye who have no desire to be made better than you are, who imagine that you are already all that can be wished. Ye hypocrites, men ye may deceive, but the Master of the feast will instantly detect the want of the wedding garment; then wo unto you, ye will be speechless. The man who has a right to be there, will ever be aspiring after higher degrees of holiness, and for nearer assimilation to the holy likeness of the Saviour. Come not ye who are destitute of a cordial love to your fellow-men. Ye selfish ones, whose bosoms never beat with an affectionate regard to those who are around you. The company there is select. It is a band of kindred, whose hearts God has touched and filled with holy love. Despoil not of its beauties the fair flower of holy charity, by drawing over it the serpent slime of your selfishness. Say not ye love God; it is a falsehood. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Come not ye whose hearts are the foul receptacles of the fiend-like passions of envy, malice, and revenge. The atmosphere around the table of the Lord, is too holy for you to breathe in it. Your breathing there will not only be highly injurious to yourselves, but spread around a pestiferous odour highly injurious to others. Ye children of the wicked one! ye enemies of all righteousness! it is no place for you. And if ye will go and eat and drink there, you will not only profane the holy ordinance, but eat and drink judgment to yourselves.

But come ye, with the broken heart and contrite spirit, who are grieving over the number and the aggravations of past offences, and earnestly seeking forgiveness, and you will hear him saying, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thine iniquities, and will remember thy sins no more." Come ye, who are mourning over a sense of your present infirmities, and the law in your members which is still warring against the law in your minds, and you will hear him addressing you, "I will help your infirmities, and heal your sicknesses." Come ye, who are sighing for greater assimilation to his likeness, who are forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing to those which are before, and you will find, that beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, ye shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Come ye, whose bosoms glow with supreme love to God, and sincere and cordial love to your fellow-men; for this is his commandment, that he that loveth God loveth his brother also; and you will hear him saying, "I love them that love me; and they that seek me shall find me. Ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." In a word, come, every sincere hearted believer, "this do in remembrance of Christ; for as often as ye eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, ye do show the Lord's death." "The Spirit from on high to such characters saith, Come; the bride, the Church of Christ saith, Come;" we, in his name, and by his authority say, Come, and assure you of a welcome reception. Come, then, for all things are ready. Come to his table with joy and humility! celebrate his dying love, and sing his matchless grace. Amen.

THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SAINTS' RESURRECTION;

A SERMON DELIVERED AT WISHAWTOWN, IN JULY, 1832, AT THE DISPENSATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,

By the Rev. ROBERT BRODIE, A.M.

"*And the graves were opened; and many bodies of Saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*"—MATTHEW xxvii. 52, 53.

It is a very remarkable fact which the Scriptures relate of the posthumous history of Elisha—that the body of a dead man, which was carrying out to burial, having, on the sudden appearance of a hostile band of Midianites, been thrown into that prophet's

sepulchre, no sooner touched his corpse, than it revived and stood up. The event, which was clearly miraculous, was designed, and had the effect of reflecting honour on the deceased prophet. Viewing it in connexion with the circumstances of his life, and especially of his raising the son of the Shunamite, it may be said in the literal sense of the terms—

"Still in his ashes lived their wonted fires."

Remarkable, however, as that occurrence must be admitted to have been, it presents but a faint type of the more astonishing event which is recorded in our text. The malice of men and devils, of which, from the cradle, Jesus had been the object, was permitted to prevail. He whose life had been signalized by so many acts of condescension and benevolence, was fixed with malefactors to the cross. As he writhes in agony, the bitter taunt is addressed to him: "He saved others, himself he cannot save." No reply proceeds from the sufferer. The paleness of his countenance becomes yet more pale. In meek submission to the will of his Father, he bows the head, and gives up the ghost. But even in this hour of the power of darkness, and at the lowest point of the Redeemer's humiliation, he is not left without a witness. Nature, in terrific accents, proclaims to the motley crowd, which Jerusalem pours forth to witness the *triple* crucifixion—that it was no common event of which they were spectators. A darkness, which might be felt, overspreads the land. The earth, the solid earth, as if conscious of the crimes of which it was the theatre, trembled under them. The temple is rent to its inmost recesses. The graves, formed in the caves and hewn out of the rocks by which Jerusalem was surrounded, and having their entrances secured by the same massy materials, are thrown open, and discover their dead. And many of these dead in mysterious sympathy with him who had been entombed, but who had burst the sepulchre, are restored to life.

It has been thought strange, that the incident is referred to by none of the other Evangelists. This furnishes no valid ground for questioning its authenticity. Events recorded by one Evangelist are often omitted by others; but this, so far from being an argument against their veracity, is an argument in their favour; as it is a proof that they did not write in concert, and that they are independent witnesses. And though, as respects the incident under consideration, there is no mention of it in the parallel histories, nor any formal notice of the earthquake, both Mark and Luke relate with Matthew, that the vail of the temple was rent in twain. Both these Evangelists, therefore, while they thus bear an indirect testimony to the earthquake which occasioned the rending of the vail, furnish a similar testimony to the opening of the graves, which was a coincident effect of the earthquake, and an effect which, I may add, is recorded to have been produced by other earthquakes, and in particular by that which overthrew the ancient city of Rhodes. We have here, then, on a comparison of the narratives of the different Evangelists, one of those *undesigned* resemblances by which the Scriptures carry along with them their own evidence—an evidence which effectually excludes the supposition of imposture, and which is the more valuable, as it is accessible to all. If this should be considered a digression, or departure from the immediate subject, it is not uncalled for in this day of rebuke and blasphemy, when, in some continental countries, infidelity has gained the ascendency formerly possessed by bigotry and superstition; and when, even in our own country, the advocates of this chilling system are advancing, with a hardihood unexampled, to wrest from us every principle which can furnish support amidst life's difficulties, or which can irradiate the darkness of the tomb.

In calling your attention to the circumstances recorded in my text, it forms no part of my design to enter into the wide field of conjecture which this subject has opened, but strictly to confine myself to the facts recorded. Not one but several discourses might be occupied by the mere detail and illustrations of the questions which have been started, and the answers given from the days of St. Ignatius down to the time of Fleming, the author of the Christology, and from his time to our own, even were we to exclude the speculations of the Millenarian theology. There is one lesson which the conjectures connected with this subject will not fail to produce on a reflecting mind. They show what the Bible would have been if it had been of mere human authorship. When we consider the multitude of idle speculations into which men have run who have given the reins to their imaginations, and when we contrast with this the sober statements of the sacred volume, the conviction will be forced on us, that the penmen wrote under the guidance of a different spirit from

their own. It obviously was not their intention to gratify unprofitable curiosity. In the book of Revelation, as in the book of Nature, there are many things which are left in obscurity, and which will remain in obscurity while we are in a state where we see only "darkly as through a glass." In the study of the one, however, as in the study of the other, the fault will be our own, if we do not acquire that "knowledge which is profitable to direct." Such is the tendency of the broad facts which this narrative contains.

May this day, like that which it commemorates, be signalized by acts of omnipotent grace. May the dead in sin be raised to the life of righteousness, and may those who are already raised to newness of life, come to the exercise of a communion Sabbath, as those resuscitated saints entered into the holy city, having shaken off the dust of the grave.

Let us consider,

I. The event recorded. "The bodies of those who slept arose."

In Scripture, we read of Samuel appearing to Saul on the eve of that battle which terminated his reign and life. That was no optical deception. This, no doubt, was what was intended by the person who was consulted by the monarch, and who was one of those impostors who obtained credit by professing to raise and procure responses from the spirits of the dead. But contrary to the expectation of the juggler, who was evidently alarmed by something unexpected, and as a punishment for the crime of the monarch, in having recourse to arts which the law of God condemned, and which he himself had once punished, the *real* Samuel was permitted to appear and to warn him of his end. But in the appearance which the text records, there is not, as in that of Samuel, the mere *spectre* of the departed. There was a real corporeal resurrection. In the case of our Lord, it was the same body which was nailed to the cross and laid in Joseph's tomb, which was raised on the third day, and in which he appeared during the period of his continuance upon earth, and with which he afterwards ascended into heaven. And it was the same bodies which, months before, or years before, had been deposited in their graves, which were now raised from the sleep of death. It was a heathen philosophy which attempted to cast dishonour on the body, which taught men to regard it as merely a clog to the soul—as the obstacle and the only obstacle which prevented it from soaring to its native dignity, and that, when it was left in the grave, it was left for ever. It is a worse than a heathen philosophy that would inculcate an utter and brutal indifference to the remains of the departed, which requires us to eradicate those feelings which would attach the least importance to the alternative, whether our ashes shall continue to slumber in the allotted repository of the dead, or shall become the prey and the pastime of the violators of man's last resting place. It is with other feelings that Christianity teaches us to regard that subordinate, but still essential, part of our nature which is deposited in the sepulchre. Christianity attempts not to gainsay the testimony of our senses. That body which was fearfully and wonderfully made is, when it becomes the subject of corruption, fearfully and wonderfully degraded: but not so degraded that it cannot be restored. The same power which renovates the soul, can and will renovate the body. Of this you have a pledge and a pattern in these first fruits of the saints' resurrection.

II. The time when this event took place. "After his resurrection."

Some have supposed that the resurrection of these departed saints happened at the time when our Lord expired on the cross, and when the vail of the temple was rent. You have only to look to the language of the text to see that this is a palpable misconception of its meaning. What took place at the time of the Lord's decease was simply the opening of the graves. Having mentioned this occurrence, the sacred historian by anticipation connects it with the resurrection of those bodies, which did not take place till Christ had risen. He was the first fruits of them that slept. The resurrection of his followers was the first of, and, in point of time, posterior to his. Till *He* rose all was despondency. The graves were indeed opened, and as this happened on the evening of our Friday, or on that which preceded the Jewish Sabbath, when the time was too short, and men's minds too much occupied by the supernatural events to attend to it on that night, and as on the Sabbath no servile work could be done, the graves must have remained open during the whole of that day. But they discovered no sights but such as were calculated to harrow up the feelings—the changed countenance and the mouldering frame. This spectacle must have been the more impressive, if you recollect the Jewish mode of interment. Their sepulchres, as has been

already intimated, were hewn out of rocks, or formed in caves, in the sides of which there were niches in which the bodies were deposited, and deposited, as is evident from the account both of the resurrection of Lazarus and our Lord, unenclosed in coffins. But the ravages and power of death were thus displayed only that they might show by contrast the omnipotent energy that could reanimate the slumbering dust and fashion it like to Christ's glorious body.

III. The character of those who were raised. "The bodies of saints arose."

Among those deposited in these places there were many, even of those recently deceased, who were, in spirit and in conduct, the reverse of what religion required. *There* lay the remains of Herod, whose character is written in blood in the annals of Bethlehem. There lay that false disciple, that son of perdition, who, for a paltry bribe, bartered his soul and betrayed his Saviour. There, too, were many whose names were less conspicuous, but whose ungodliness was not less flagrant. Of these, doubtless, there were some of the Scribes and Pharisees, the professed enemies of our Lord. Over these death retained its dominion. If their graves were opened, and their remains exposed, this was the utmost. The remarkable event we are now considering was the type, not of a general, but of a particular resurrection. It was *saints*, or holy persons whose bodies were raised.

This designation, while it marks their general character, determines nothing as to the particular individuals. Some have conjectured that they were some of the more eminent saints mentioned in the Old Testament. But this is contrary to the probabilities of the case, as suggested by the terms of the sacred narrative. The Jews did not bury in their cities, still less in their synagogues. When the vital spark has fled, there is a marked distinction between the departed and survivors, in respect of condition, and there ought to be a corresponding distinction likewise in respect of place. "Bury my dead out of my sight," is, in the most extensive sense of the terms, the dictate of discretion. The Jews acted on this principle, their places of interment being invariably without the walls of their cities. This fact gives a determinate meaning to the language, which is here employed. When the persons whose bodies were raised are said to have entered into the city, it implies that they had been buried in its vicinity. But we have reason to believe, that the remains of the patriarchs and of the others to whom the above conjecture points, were all interred here, nor do we know, in regard to some of them, what was their place of sepulchre. If other saints of former ages had been raised, it seems improbable that David, who was so eminent a type of the Messiah, should not have been one of them. But we know from the discourse of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, that "the sepulchre of that patriarch was with them unto that day." It is a still stronger objection to the hypothesis we are now considering, that the narrative of the Evangelist supposes that the persons who came out of their graves, were not only such as had lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem, but that they were recently deceased, as they were known to those to whom they appeared. It seems probable, therefore, that they had not only seen our Lord in the flesh, but had believed in him. Should it be surmised that the evangelical history gives us no reason to suppose that the friends of our Lord in Jerusalem were so numerous, that many could have died during the period of his public ministry, even if we take the longest term which has been assigned to it, it is sufficient to reply, that it is only from such incidental notices as this that any estimate on this subject can be formed, and that this may be one of the cases which show that, from the retiring character of true piety, the number of its possessors is often underrated. But it is not necessary to the establishment of the interpretation for which we contend, to restrict the resurrection to those who died during our Lord's ministry. Who forbids us to suppose, that Simeon and Anna, and those other pious individuals who, at the time of the presentation of the infant Saviour in the temple, were waiting for the consolation of Israel, and who must have died within the thirty years preceding, had, at the time of the crucifixion, surviving relatives and acquaintances, to whose recollections their persons were still familiar? Nor is it less probable, or at variance with the text to suppose, that these or some of these should have been among the saints who were raised from their graves, after our Lord's resurrection.

IV. The purpose for which they were raised. "They went into the holy city and appeared unto many."

It is Jerusalem that is denominated the "Holy City." If it had derived its designation from the character of its inhabitants, a very different epithet must have been

applied. The very reverse of holy must have been the character of a city among whose ecclesiastical governors—men resembling Caiaphas, were the predominating spirits; and which contained a populace, which, in circumstances where humanity was the only quality required to inspire abhorrence, could look with apathy on the sufferings of injured innocence—a populace whose infamy it was that they did not give expression to feelings which the occasion dictated in a voice so loud, as would have not only drowned the taunts uttered around the cross, but would have reached Caiaphas in his palace, and Pilate in his citadel; but which, instead of this, left it to a heathen spectator to give utterance to the sentiments of unbiassed feeling. "Truly this was a righteous man." But the city derived its designation, not from its inhabitants, but from its destination as the depository of the oracles of God, and the place which he had appointed for his worship. The holy nature of these appointments was not affected by the deportment of the inhabitants. The purity of God's ordinances cannot be sullied by the worthlessness of man. The hands of those who betray Christ may be this day with him at his table. By your actions you may "crucify the Son of God afresh," but you do not thereby divest the elements disturbed of any of their virtue or sanctity. Whatever be the character of communicants, these elements still remain the august symbols of all that is holy and venerable—of truths which fill heaven with wonder, and which ought to fill the earth with praise. And Jerusalem, notwithstanding the character of its inhabitants, though its priests were a "whited sepulchre," and its "temple a den of thieves," was still the place where God "recorded his name"—"the city of the great King."

The language of the sacred narrative clearly imports that the entrance of these resuscitated saints into Jerusalem, was not for the purpose of resuming their former situations. It is said that they *appeared* unto many. When our Lord raised the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow, and the brother of Martha and Mary, all of whom returned to their former occupations, no such language as this is employed. But it *is* the language employed to describe the intercourse which our Lord held with his disciples during the forty days he continued on earth after his resurrection. He is said to have been *seen* by them, and to have *appeared* to them. The inference is plain—that as our Lord did not again become an inhabitant of this world, but remained on earth for a limited time, to satisfy his disciples that he was truly risen, the appearance of these saints was for a similar purpose.

Like their Master, they appeared not to *all* the people. On the greater proportion the miracle would have been lost. They had already rejected proofs of his Messiahship sufficient for their conviction. But neither was it only to one or two: they appeared to "many."

Imagine what would be the effect, if your recently departed friends were to appear to you, not in the wasted form in which they were consigned to the dust, but in that form in which they appeared before they were visited by their mortal malady, and clothed in the habiliments in which they had lain, and which custom has consecrated to the grave; imagine this, I say, and you will form some idea of the sensation which the appearance of these saints must have produced on the spectators. It is not said what they communicated. Nor are we warranted to conclude that they revealed the secrets of their prison house. The design was to furnish, in connexion with other circumstances, a visible attestation of Christ's resurrection; a design which their mere *appearance*, their persons being sufficiently identified, would of itself accomplish.

In conclusion, I would call on you, in the first place, to think on the blessed prospects presented by the events which you this day commemorate, the death and resurrection of our Lord.

By his death, he has destroyed death. Those whose bodies were raised, and who shared in his victory over death, were the first fruits of an abundant harvest. Not confined to them, the power of Christ's resurrection is one to which all are subjected. The hour is on the wing, when the trump of the archangel shall awake the sleeping dust. It is not the saints about Jerusalem only, but those of every age and country who shall come forth and "enter into the holy city." The facts to which you have been here referred, in confirmation of this hope, do not go merely to the extent of showing the possibility of the event. They are a public monument for every age, that it has actually happened; under circumstances too, if we attend to the length of time which some of the parties raised, must have continued under the power of death, not dissimilar to that which will take place at the general resurrection. A far

stronger proof is thus given than what the rich man wanted to be given to his brethren, when he requested that one should be sent to them from the invisible world. How powerfully does this subject appeal to your hopes and fears! It was a memorable night in Egypt, when there was not a house where there was not one dead. We recognise in the description of the sacred historian, the truth of nature: "There was a great cry in Egypt." But it was the simultaneous occurrence only that was peculiar; the event itself is familiar to all of us. Where is the dwelling in which this has not happened, and which is not liable to its return? I address myself to those whose feelings have in this way been already lacerated, and must be lacerated again; and who must exemplify in their own persons, how soon they know not, the universality of death's dominion. But is the special and characteristic tendency of our hopes as Christians, and of the facts which we this day commemorate, to take from the grave its natural horrors. If the house of this tabernacle is to be dissolved, a nobler edifice shall rise on its ruins. We this day stand at an empty tomb. He who died has risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of those who slept. An earthquake shall again burst the sepulchre, and those that are in their graves shall live. With these prospects, how criminal if we shall bring to the services of this day a heartless formality. How dishonourable will it contrast with the enthusiasm excited by the prospect of transitory privileges! Let the triumphant feelings with which the aged Simeon regarded the infant Saviour, be ours, when we this day partake of the symbols of his sufferings: "Now lettest thou thy servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen thy salvation."

II. Think on the character of those who shall share in these privileges.

Our Lord rose, and entered into heaven as the representative of the people; and though the unholy as well as the holy shall be raised, the former will neither have part nor lot in the honours of that day. For them it had been infinitely better if no trumpet's voice had rent the bands of the sepulchre. They shall come forth like the criminal from the condemned cell, to undergo the sentence which shall fix their place among the workers of iniquity. "All entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord, shall be administered abundantly," to the regenerated alone—to those who, while living in the world, are separated from its pollutions—to whom the exercises of this day are something more than mere formalities—who bring to them a spirit in accordance with their sanctity. Without this you may externally have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, but you can have no fellowship with him in his glorious resurrection. You want the spirit and character of his people, and you must be strangers likewise to their high destiny. Let this all-important truth, while yet it may be available for your happiness, sink deep into your souls. This day is salvation sounded in your ears. This day your covenant with sin may be broken, and instead of the awful scenes which will open on those who deliberately make their grave with the wicked, yours may be the brightening prospects of that holy brotherhood who have "hope in their death."

III. Think on the special manifestations which the devout observers of the death and resurrection, may enjoy in these exercises.

If the sight of the risen saints at first alarmed the persons to whom they appeared, eventually, in connexion with other events, it afforded an assurance that Christ was risen, that the "one oblation" was offered and accepted, and that "the way into the holiest of all was made manifest." It is the design and tendency of the ordinance, for the observance of which we are this day, more especially, assembled, to convey to you similar assurances, and to impart similar consolation. That this should not be the general effect produced, forms no objection to the truth of this representation, and accords with the analogy presented by the facts we have been considering. All who saw the graves opened, did not see those who rose. And it may be, that all who commemorate the dying love of the Redeemer, shall not feel the elevating prospects of the Christian. But if this is not your experience, it is because sin and secularity interpose a veil between you and these spiritual enjoyments. Divine consolations still "enter into" the holy soul. Objects calculated in themselves to excite the same alarm, which the first appearance of the risen saints produced in their friends, will be contemplated when viewed in connexion with the discoveries of the Gospel, with the complacency with which those saints were afterwards regarded, when the object of their appearance was fully known. You will rejoice, not only in the cross which Christ bore, but in that which he imposes on his people. Sufferings, and difficulties,

and reproaches endured with christian spirit, and in the christian cause, will be seen to "work out a far more exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory." May God grant that the reality and excellency of religion may thus "appear unto many;" and that the elements distributed, may prove the lively symbols which shall effectually represent not a crucified merely, but a risen, glorified Redeemer.

NO FLESH JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW;

A Lecture by the Rev. David Carment, A.M.—*Concluded from page* 24.

In the preceding verses, the Apostle had stated the matter of our justification, and given a description of the persons that are made partakers of this blessing. He, to the exclusion of every thing in us, or to be wrought by us, expressly states, "that the righteousness of God to which the law and prophets bare witness, was our alone justifying righteousness; and that as all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, there was no difference; that one had no more claim on the favour of God than another, nor any title to justification in the sight of God." They were all guilty, all under condemnation, and, of course, without any plea before God which they could urge in their own favour. This justifying righteousness, then, could only be taken hold of by faith: it is unto all, and upon all who believe, and none else; and it is evident, that this faith includes in it not only belief in Christ as the Lord our righteousness, but belief in our own guilt and utter helplessness.

Verse 24. In order more clearly to establish the point which he had been all along proving, and in order to cut down every self-righteous spirit in man, he goes to the very foundation of this blessing, and shows that it is irrespective of all foreseen faith and good works in man, it springs entirely from the free grace of God, that is, from the free everlasting love of God to man, as displayed in the business of a sinner's justification before God. This appears in his purposing to save sinners, and to recover them from their lost estate; in contriving the plan of redemption; in calling his dear Son to engage in the work; in Christ's engaging as a surety; in the Father's sending him, and in Christ's coming to do his will; in Christ's accomplishing the work, and in the Father's acceptance and imputation of it; in the bestowment of faith, and all those graces which are necessary for our laying hold of, and feeding on Christ, and making us meet for enjoying that inheritance which Christ has purchased for us, and which none without holiness can enjoy. Oh! sinner, let me entreat thee to ponder on the freedom and unsearchable riches of this grace of God; and, oh! lie not down this night until you have obtained some sweet soul knowledge of Christ, and until you have seen somewhat of its wondrous extent and blessed effects. We can find no hope out of Christ; and the freeness of his grace is surely eminently calculated to soften the hardest heart, and to bring the sinner on his knees. If they to whom much is forgiven love much, surely our love should burn with a brighter flame than it now does.

2. The Apostle states the meritorious cause of our justification, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This implies that we were formerly in a state of captivity to sin, Satan, and the law; and not only captives, but willing captives. Redemption is a deliverance from this captivity, and this redemption is in Christ Jesus. It was purchased by him; he is the Author and Finisher of it; nor is this any objection to the freeness of justification that it was purchased by Christ, for it was grace in God to give his Son, and grace in Christ to give himself a sacrifice to satisfy for our sins, for whatever it cost him it was free to us. We paid none of the price, we bare none of the burden, we overcame no enemies, and wrought no deliverance for ourselves; so that it is just as free to us as if it had been bestowed by God, without the intervention of a Mediator.

Verse 25. "When it is said that Christ was sent forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." When reconciliation is spoken of, men are very apt to suppose that Christ, by his sacrifice and death, has procured for us the love

and favour of God; but the preceding passage may teach us, that instead of this the sacrifice and death of Christ was a fruit of the grace or favour and love of God. That instead of this, grace devised the plan of redemption through Christ as the only way consistently with the divine perfections, for removing the obstacles which a broken law and insulted justice had interposed betwixt the grace of God and the redemption of man; and in this way every obstacle was removed, the law was fulfilled, justice satisfied, sin taken away, the power of Satan broken, and provision made for the complete removal of every obstacle which could at all impede the deliverance of man from that state of slavery in which he was held by his spiritual enemies. It was for the remission of sins that he was sent forth, even past sins, the sins of Old Testament saints, who were with him in heaven long before his incarnation. Yet still justice demanded satisfaction, though in virtue of the promise of Christ, to satisfy for their sins, and the Father's full reliance on the fulfilment of that promise, they were admitted to the enjoyment of that bliss, and the possession of that inheritance which he has purchased for his people. We see here that it is a part of the divine plan to remit and take away sin, as well as to satisfy justice; and all this is done to manifest not only the efficacy of the death of Christ, and the sufficiency of his righteousness, but also to set forth the righteousness or faithfulness of God, as gloriously and greatly displayed in the death and satisfaction of Christ, and in the way he has taken to bestow redemption on his people. It is perfectly evident, from the passage before us, that sin must be remitted ere we attain to the enjoyment of happiness, and that this can be done in no other way than by the sacrifice of Christ. Sinners are little aware how much they are indebted to the forbearance of God in deferring the execution of justice. Their sins are so grievous and so many, that they call loudly, like the blood of Abel, to heaven for vengeance on the offenders. There would have been no room left for the application of Christ's righteousness, had not the forbearance of God been displayed in not inflicting the just punishment of sin; so that, in every view we take of the stupendous plan of redemption, we see grace and love shining forth in such a way as consists with, and exalts the justice and faithfulness of God; sin is atoned for and pardoned; God reconciled, justice exalted, and the faith of God's people established on an immoveable foundation, as they have now a sufficient answer to every charge against them.

Verse 26. Though this may not appear very evident to blind, unconverted sinners, yet nothing is a matter of greater wonder to the believer in Jesus, especially when first awakened to see the extent and aggravation of his sins. Then how can God be just in justifying such a sinner as he is? He sees, then, the vileness of sin, its opposition not merely to the will, but to the very being of God. He reads and believes the sentence pronounced against sin, and that the justice and faithfulness of God call for the infliction of the punishment denounced against it; and it is only by obtaining insight into God's covenant, and clearer views of the plan of salvation, that he is at all enabled to reconcile the justification of the sinner with the perfections of God, or to see his righteousness brightly displayed when he justified those who believe in Jesus. The justification of the believer in Jesus is the means of declaring or making known the righteousness of God, which may include in it not only the manifestation of his righteousness in the punishment of the surety, and thus obtain every satisfaction to offended justice in the sufferings of Him who stood in our law-room, so that we are delivered from condemnation. Yet sin was punished, and God's hatred of it, and determination to punish it abundantly, manifested in a way the most clearly convincing and decisive; in this way also the sufficiency and excellency of Christ's righteousness is abundantly manifested; and God testifies, that it is a complete and perfect righteousness with which he is well pleased, when, on account of it, he justifies sinners.

This doctrine is peculiarly calculated for comforting the people of God, as it tends to remove all those fears and doubts which are apt to arise in the mind from partial and defective views of the divine character and perfections. We see here that there is no other way in which the righteousness of God can be so distinctly declared and set forth, as in the justification of sinners. It is in this way only that God is honoured, and the glory of his grace and justice alike displayed. This is the way in which they harmonize and even co-operate; so that there is no way in which a sinner can glorify God so remarkably as in believing the divine testimony concerning Christ, and freely relying upon him as the Lord our righteousness and strength. Amen

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES STARK, Greenock.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D., Paisley.

JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS, AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY;

A SERMON PREACHED AT GREENOCK,

By the Rev. JAMES STARK,

Greenock.

"*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*"—JAMES ii. 24.

IN the earliest age of the Christian church, the apostle Paul had declared that faith in Jesus Christ was the only ground of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. In arriving at this conclusion, he had proved by a process of clear and logical reasoning that all were sinners, and consequently unable to perform such services as might recommend them to the favour of the Deity. If salvation, then, depended upon the performance of such services, it was manifest that salvation could never be obtained. Having brought his readers to this point, he proceeded to lay before them the mysteries of the Gospel—to show them the efficiency of that atonement which had been made, and to induce them to seek refuge in the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sins. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." The faith, however, which is here meant by the Apostle, he takes occasion elsewhere to explain. It is not a *dead* faith—that species of it which produces no fruit—that lifeless inert principle (if such language could be philosophically employed) which has no influence upon the regenerated soul, but "that faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world."

Even with this explanation, however, his doctrine was soon destined to be grievously misunderstood, and wilfully misrepresented. Men of licentious passions discovered in it, or rather *thought* they discovered in it a refuge from the consequences of their crimes, and embraced it with greediness. They pretended that faith alone was sufficient to entitle them to heaven; and that morality was altogether unnecessary, and even frustrated the grace of God. Many of the teachers of religion, deeply imbued with the same dangerous opinions, inculcated them openly upon the people, and scattered far and wide the seeds of this noxious heresy. The consequences may be easily conceived. A few years had changed the face and character of the christian church. The most criminal passions were gratified; enormities till then unheard of in the community of the faithful, were recklessly committed, and the mantle with which they cloaked their deeds of darkness, was their prostitution of this sacred doctrine. It became necessary, therefore, on the part of true Christians, to undeceive them; to tear asunder the covering in which they were wrapped; to stem that torrent of depravity which was threatening to sweep in its progress every vestige of morality from the land. The apostle James,

among others, applied himself assiduously to the accomplishment of this object. With this view he adopted a course somewhat different from that of the apostle Paul; for while the latter inculcated justification by faith, the faith that worketh by love, the former inculcated more particularly the necessity of good works, as the fruits and evidences of saving faith. The reasons of this difference in their mode of enforcing the same doctrines can be easily given. The apostle Paul was anxious to demonstrate the absurdity of expecting salvation by works—an opinion to which his Jewish countrymen clung with their characteristic tenacity. At the same time, when he does this, he warns them against the perversion of his doctrine, and assures them that true faith produces, and must produce, the purest of all obedience. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." The object, again, of the writer before us, was to correct the perversion of this doctrine, to show us the impossibility of being saved, while we continued in our sins. But he does not contradict the doctrine of justification by faith: on the contrary, he maintains and confirms it. He carries it out to its effects. Wherever faith exists, it will be seen by its fruits; wherever these fruits are not, faith is not. In this chapter, he enters at considerable length into the subject, and proves from analogy and particular examples, that works, as the consequences of faith, are necessary to the very existence of justification, and then draws the inference contained in our text, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

From the train of reasoning employed in the context, it is obvious that the Apostle recognises faith as the instrument of our justification; but at the same time, in accordance with the design which we have already stated he had in view, he is led to insist more particularly on the consequences of faith. This will account for his substitution in some cases of the effect for the cause. Thus, when he tells us, that Abraham was justified by works, he must be understood merely as denoting, that if Abraham had refused to offer up his son, he would have manifested a want of faith in the promises, and a want of obedience to the commands of God, and by consequence that he was not in a justified state. Works, then, he considers as the test of justification by faith, and in this sense, we are to understand the language in our text. Having made these preliminary remarks, we proceed to show how a man is justified by works; or what connexion works have with our justification.

We remark, then, in the first place, that without holiness of heart and life, we cannot be in a justified state, because holiness of heart and life, with its remote consequences here and hereafter, is the very end and design of our justification.

That man is now a corrupted being, is a truth so plainly revealed in the Scripture, and so clearly demonstrable from reason, that it were needless for our present purpose to attempt the proof. Let us, with a firm determination to judge righteous judgment, cast our eye over the moral history of our species, and we will discover in its minutest, as well as most prominent features, the marks of its degradation. "The Lord himself looked down from heaven, to see if there was any that understood, that did seek after God. They are gone aside; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good; no, not one." The nature of this corruption was, if possible, a much greater evil than the universality of its extent. It unfitted man for the purposes of his creation; it perverted his moral powers; it made him in love with misery, while he had neither the power nor inclination to regenerate himself. In such a situation man must have continued for ever, but for the plan of mercy, and the accomplishment of that plan. The Son of God took upon him our nature, and by his sufferings and death made an atonement for sin. What was the object of this atonement? Was it merely to expiate sin, and give impunity to sinners? Was it merely to free us from the punishment which we had incurred, and were still incurring, that we might revel without fear of the future, in those very vices which brought him to the dust of death? Was it merely, in short, to raise up a barrier between us and the vengeance of Almighty God, that under its refuge we might continue to sin? No, verily! There was a higher, a nobler design—more worthy of God, more beneficial to man. He did not come to save us *in*, but *from* our sins. He did not come merely to make an atonement for iniquity, but to bring in an everlasting righteousness. He did not come merely to hide us from the wrath of God, but to introduce us into his favour and fellowship. He came to purify unto

himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

This, then, was the design of the atonement, to renovate our degraded nature, to purge it from corruption, to make us pure as God is pure, and holy as he is holy. But if this be the design of the atonement, then it must be the design also of our justification. By it alone can the blessings of the atonement become ours in possession. It is true, that the atonement was designed to promote more than this, and does actually promote more. The happiness of man, though certainly contemplated in that great event, is but a part, and in some respects too, an unimportant part of its consequences. By it the character of the divine Being is more strikingly illustrated; his justice and mercy are made to harmonize; his abhorrence of sin is inscribed as it were on the cross of Christ, in colours of blood. It is impossible for finite minds to calculate the effects of this atoning sacrifice, to tell the influence which it may have, not only upon this world of ours, but on the countless beings that people the wide universe of God. The hill of Calvary is the great watch-tower of creation—the beacon that there sheds its light over the nature of sin, may extend that light to the remotest regions of space, will burn through eternity! But still, in so far as the happiness of man was the object of the atonement, in so far is it the object of justification. We have already proved, that the atonement was designed to produce good works, and it follows clearly that justification must produce good works also. If this be not the case, then the divine Being must have lost his end in our justification, and in the atonement upon which it is founded. If he had determined to effect this result,—and we have seen that such was his determination,—and if he did not foresee that it could not be accomplished by these means, then he is not possessed of prescience; and if he did foresee, but could not devise a better remedy, then he is not possessed of infinite wisdom; and if he could have devised a better remedy, but was not able to accomplish it, then he is not possessed of infinite power. But each and all of these suppositions are manifestly so blasphemous and absurd, that we are compelled to take shelter from this monstrous alternative, in the belief that justification *must* and certainly *does* produce holiness of heart and purity of conduct.

We have said that holiness with its remote consequences here and hereafter, is the end of our justification. These consequences are the enjoyment of God in fellowship and communion with him upon earth, and especially in another and a better world. If these be the consequences of our justification, then most purity of conduct be a consequence also. It is impossible that they who are the servants of sin can be the servants of God; and if they are not his servants, then they have no fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. What fellowship hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial? The temple of vice cannot be erected in that heart, where the God of heaven dwells. The intercourse of social life will furnish us with an instructive lesson on this very point. In the companionships of men there can be no friendship, where there is no community of feeling. Kindred spirits require but to come within the sphere of their mutual influence, to call forth the congenial sympathies of their nature; to be knit soul to soul; but discordant elements will never coalesce, or if they do so for a time, the unequal union will soon burst asunder from the heterogeneous qualities of which it is made up. Thus it is in the union of believers with their God. There is, so far as human nature is capable in its present imperfect state, a community of feeling with God—a sameness of affection—a co-operation with him in the moral government of the universe. They are assimilated to his image; they are made partakers of the divine nature; they are like Him in those graces which he bestows upon them here, and when at last their disembodied spirits shall wing their way to the regions of eternal blessedness, they shall see him as he is, and appear with him in glory. But they must be holy before this blessedness be theirs. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Heaven is too pure and too holy to admit within it those who indulge in the commission of iniquity. *There*, no corruption, nothing that defiles, shall enter. It is the abode of purity—of those spirits who have kept their first estate; who have been uncontaminated with the pollutions of iniquity; and of those other spirits who, though inheriting the corruption of our fallen nature, have been delivered from it, have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is the dwelling-place of the most High God, and in such a presence no vicious prospensity can

live. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure. If, then, the enjoyment of such felicity be the end of our justification, and if holiness be necessary for its attainment, then holiness must be the end also of our justification, and must be produced by it.

We remark, in the second place, without holiness of heart and life we cannot be in a justified state, because the principles implied in justification infallibly produce holiness of heart and life.

We mean by this proposition which we have now announced, that it is impossible that the justified person can be otherwise than fruitful in good works. Were he capable of *indulging* in vicious practices—for the best of men will be overtaken in a fault—and of neglecting habitually those duties which he is bound to perform, he would be doing a violence to his regenerated nature, for which there would be no possibility of accounting. If, perchance, such an anomaly were to happen in the moral, then also might we expect such another in the physical world—to gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles! But it is manifestly an event which ought not to happen, *which never can happen.*

It has been said, indeed, that if we are justified only by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and that if in this, faith alone without any human merit be the instrument, then we are set free from all moral obligation, then the flood-gates of licentiousness are thrown open, and men are at liberty to sink the deeper into sin, that the grace of God may be the more signally glorified. Such an infamous comment as this, on the doctrines of free grace, is the result of utter misapprehension of their nature. Between justification and sanctification, there is a close and inseparable connexion; and he who has been made partaker of the one blessing, is equally a partaker of the other. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" It is manifestly impossible; and a very few remarks will suffice to show us how this is the case.

Before a sinner has been justified, the Spirit of God must have been operating upon his mind, and must have produced certain convictions which he could not otherwise have had. He must have seen the glory of God, and the excellency of the divine law, in a light very different from that in which he had previously viewed them. He must have felt that sin was not that trivial matter which he had been accustomed to believe, and that indulgence in it was far from being that pardonable frailty with the conviction of which he had laid the flattering unction to his soul. Awakened to a true sense of his guilt, and of the danger to which it exposed him, he must have become aware that it was an evil thing to sin against the Lord. In consequence of all this, connected with a consciousness of his own inability to expiate the wrath of God, he is induced to flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel. In doing so, however, contrition for sin is requisite. He must repent bitterly in sackcloth and in ashes. How else can he embrace the offers of mercy? If he has not felt himself to be a sinner, lying under the wrath of God, what can induce him to flee from that wrath, and ask the forgiveness of his sins? If he knew not how offensive it is to that Being, at whose tribunal he must soon appear, he would not feel that restless anxiety to be assured of his interest in the atonement, and his safety at the great day. All these sensations *are* felt. He has been aroused to a painful sense of his condition; he has become alive to his danger; like the publican of old, he smites upon his breast, and says, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." These gracious convictions end at last in justification. And is it conceivable, after he has been justified, after he has asked and obtained the forgiveness of his sins, after he has repented of sin and abhorred it, after he has fled for refuge to the blood of Jesus Christ; that he should run on in the same course of iniquity as before; nay, that he should start back and sink deeper into that very gulf, out of which he had cried so mightily for deliverance? Is it conceivable, that the very circumstance of his being pardoned should make him love that which he had just before regarded with the greatest abhorrence? God forbid! he has become dead to sin: he can live no longer therein.

The very principles which lead the sinner to become a Christian, lead him also to grow in grace. His renovated nature revolts at the contamination of iniquity. He avoids it, as he would the avenger of blood. He follows after holiness; he follows on to know the Lord. We are justified by faith, and if these are not the consequences of our justification, then our faith, if indeed we

have faith, is dead and worthless. It will not save us. We must be justified by our works, and not by faith only. This, as the Apostle argues in the context, was the case with Abraham. He believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness; but how was this faith attested? By his works, when he did not hesitate at the commandment of God to offer up his son for a burnt-offering. He had been actually justified many years before; but his willingness to offer up his son, his only son, his child of promise and of prayer, was the clearest of all proofs that his faith was genuine and sincere.

We remark, in the third place, that holiness of heart and life is the only evidence which we can give of our justification to our fellow-men and to the Church of Christ.

By our works, then, must we be justified in the sight of men. There is no other mark by which the followers of Jesus can be distinguished from the world lying in wickedness. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is a remark which comes from the highest authority. It clearly entitles us to form a judgment, in part at least, of the character and state of our brethren, as well as of our own character and state.

If professed Christians know not that they stand or fall in the estimation of their fellow-men, by the consistency or inconsistency of their practices with their avowed principles, then they are ignorant of a fact which the voice of history, sacred and profane, has attested in every age. "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" was the exclamation of the astonished heathen, even in the infancy of the christian religion; and the same spirit is still at work, although it must be regretted that the same honour cannot in many instances be given to the followers of the cross. Let Christians act as they may, they may rest assured that their conduct will not escape the observation of the world; and if it is not in unison with the principles of their religion, it will receive even from them the condemnation which it deserves. The eagle eye of the ungodly follows the Christian with unwearied assiduity; watches every part of his public and private deportment, observes every action, and is by no means slow in discovering any defect. Immediately upon such a discovery is the outcry of fiendish exultation raised; it is sounded far and wide; and not only the individual at fault, but Christianity itself suffers, religion is wounded in the house of her friends. Nor can we complain much in this respect of the injustice of the world. We profess to regulate our conduct by certain principles; and if we do it not, then we violate these professions, and earn censure and rebuke. The life of the Christian should be a practical commentary upon his creed. He should exemplify in his own conduct a pattern of those graces which he inculcates upon others. He is gazed at by others. His words and actions are, as it were, weighed and measured, that a proper estimate of religion may be formed.

In the same manner that the character of every man is determined by his actions, is that of the Christian. The secret principles within would remain for ever unobserved, did they not, by compelling us to act in consistency with their dictates, discover their true nature. Nor is there any great difficulty in arriving at a proper conclusion upon this very point, provided we have in our power the means of observing a man's conduct, and the effects which it has upon himself, and the little circle in which he moves. It is a very mistaken notion to suppose, that principle may be in some cases an inactive thing, and incapable of exerting any influence over the moral conduct of a man. And it is, if possible, a still more mistaken notion to suppose, that we may believe firmly in certain fixed principles, and yet so far from acting in accordance with these principles, act in direct opposition to their dictates. Such opinions are founded upon ignorance of man's moral nature, and of the immutable laws by which the moral world is regulated. The truth is, that principle is every thing It is that alone which impels to action—which makes every power, and feeling, and affection within us subservient to itself, which makes us what we are. If these remarks be just, it will follow, that, from the colour and complexion of a man's conduct, we can easily infer his character, because we are enabled by this means to determine the principles to which that conduct owes its existence. A man may, indeed tell us that such and such principles are his; but if we perceive effects in his life different from what we should have expected, then we are entitled to conclude, either that he is deceiving himself, or, what is more probable, that he has been deceiving us. He may tell us that he has faith in Jesus Christ; but if we see not the pro-

tical effects of faith in his intercourse with the world; if he is not honest to himself, to his neighbour, and to his God; if he violate the requirements of the law continually and without remorse; if he indulge in those vices which are unseemly and unbefitting the christian character, then we are justified in assuring him that such a principle hath no place in his bosom. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" The absurdity of this supposition is strikingly shown by the Apostle in an analogous case. "If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" The answer is easy. Mere expressions of brotherly love, however ardent and sincere, are but a mockery of our destitution, if they are unaccompanied with their proper effects. They are unmeaning sounds; for it is impossible that we *can* feel love for our brother if we allow him to perish for want, while we ourselves have enough and to spare. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. It is, in fact, an absurdity in nature—a principle apart from practice—a cause without an effect—a body without a soul!

It must be observed, farther, that we are bound to give the same evidence of our justification to the Church of Christ. So long as there is a visible church upon earth, there must be some standard by which to try character, and determine to what class it belongs. But it is easy to deceive us with principles, if principles alone, without my reference to conduct, be made that standard. In our present state, indeed, we can arrive at no infallible certainty of character; but we are at all events justified in drawing a favourable conclusion, if professed principles and open practice correspond, and equally justified in drawing an unfavourable conclusion if they do not. An unbeliever may possess some marks of a christian character; but, without these marks, no man can be a Christian. By our works, then, must we be justified.

In the last place, holiness of heart and life is the only evidence of our justification that will be received at the judgment-seat of God.

We have already stated, that faith in Jesus Christ is the only ground of our justification; but, in connexion with this, and indeed as the evidence of its existence, must good works be taken into the account. It is remarkable, that in the sacred volume eternal life is uniformly promised to those only who do well. The blessings of salvation, though purchased by the atonement, and enjoyed by faith, are always annexed to the performance of duty. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Acknowledging the divinity of the Saviour, and subscribing to the doctrines which he taught, is in so far well; but it is not enough. We have his own authority for saying that such men will never enter into the kingdom of heaven. A profession of faith in Jesus, if unsupported by the works of righteousness which it ought to have produced, will avail us nothing at the great day. Instead of procuring for us the favour of the Judge, it will call forth his displeasure, and bring down a double vengeance on our heads. "Many will say unto me at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Faith is necessary, but holiness is equally necessary. It is certain that if we have nothing more than a correct belief in the principles of religion, to plead in our behalf at the day of final account and retribution, then we also, like the profligate and profane, must call upon the hills and mountains to cover us from the wrath of the Judge. Our professions, gifts, and services, nay, even the miracles we may have wrought in the name of Jesus, will be alike in vain—vain as to any influence they will have in obtaining for us a verdict of acquittal, but not vain in that tremendous influence which they *will* have over our doom. Our guilt will be the more aggravated; our eternal destiny the more awfully severe.

A beautiful and sublime delineation of the point which we are now endeavouring to establish, is to be found in the account which our Lord himself has given us of the day of judgment. He has there represented his chosen people, the blessed of his Father, as standing upon his right hand, and invited to the enjoyment of that felicity which had been prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. And to show that they were indeed the persons for whom this

felicity was prepared, he makes known the good works which they had performed, as the fruits and evidences of their saving faith. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me." On the left stood those who had performed no such actions, and who were in consequence consigned to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. It is of no importance to profess our belief in the principles of Christianity, if we walk not according to its precepts. "Thou believest," says the writer of this Epistle, in a strain of the keenest and most cutting sarcasm, "thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: *the devils also believe and tremble.*"

If such, then, be the real state of the matter; if holiness be the very end and design of our justification; if it be its native and necessary consequence; if it be the only evidence which we can give of our justification to our fellow-men, and to the Church of Christ; and, above all, if it be the only evidence which will be taken at the judgment-seat of God, then surely we are justified in drawing the same inference as the Apostle, in saying with him, in the language of our text, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

Does the grace of God then, does faith in Jesus Christ lead to licentiousness? How false and calumnious the charge! Faith and works go hand in hand. "God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Let no man imagine, that, if he has a correct creed, all is well. Something more is requisite. Our prayers and our praises, if they are neutralized by our conduct, are an abomination to the Lord. "Behold, to obey, is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

THE HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF PONTIUS PILATE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, PAISLEY, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 1832.

By the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D.

"*When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.*"—MATTHEW xxvii. 34.

My design, in discoursing from these words, shall be to illustrate the character and conduct of Pontius Pilate; and in doing so, I shall, *first*, attend to the leading facts of his history in general, and particularly as recorded in the sacred narrative; and, then, in the *second* place, endeavour to point out those important lessons of moral and spiritual instruction which his character and conduct, as thus exhibited, may suggest to our minds.

I. Of the place of Pilate's birth, his education, and his earlier life, we have no specific information, either from the sacred writers, or from Josephus, or from any of the heathen historians. He was, no doubt, a Gentile by birth, and probably a native of Italy. He was the successor of Gratus in the governorship of Judea, and he was nominated to that important charge by Tiberius Cæsar.

The land of Palestine, having been reduced to the situation of a Roman province, was nevertheless governed by a king of its own, till a few years after the birth of Christ, when the "Shiloh" having "come," "the sceptre" did "depart from Judea;" and thus the prophecy of aged Jacob on his deathbed was literally fulfilled. In place of a native king, with something like independent power, the kingdom was henceforth to be governed by a viceroy, or procurator, sent from Rome, who, with his own privy council, and that of the seventy or Sanhe-

drim, was invested with the full exercise of civil jurisdiction in the province, subject to the review of the imperial dynasty of Augustus. It was about the year A. D. 26 or 27, that Pontius Pilate was nominated by the Emperor Tiberius to the procuratorship of Judea. His conduct in this important trust soon disclosed the leading features of his character. One of the first acts of his government was to provoke needlessly the rage of the Jews, by introducing a part of the Roman army to occupy winter quarters at Jerusalem; and this was done secretly, with the view of gradually undermining the whole system of Jewish law, and changing the long venerated usages of the country. In addition to this, he introduced the effigies of Cæsar which were upon the ensigns or standards of the armies, into the very heart of the city; and this was held by the Jews to be a flagrant outrage upon that law of the decalogue which forbids the making of images in connexion with the worship of God. The images of the Emperor were particularly offensive to the Jews, because to him whom they represented, something very nearly approaching to divine homage was exacted of the subjects of the imperial sway. The inhabitants of Jerusalem did exhibit, on this occasion, a noble example of heroic steadfastness to the cause of truth and of God; and they submitted to the most cruel inflictions from the hands of Pilate, rather than tamely yield to what they considered an unhallowed usurpation.

The enmity of the Jews against Pilate was farther aggravated by his attempt to lay hold of the money which was usually levied for the service of the temple, and applying it to the purpose of introducing water into the city from a distance of two hundred furlongs; a procedure whose sacrilegious impiety could not fail to rouse into indignation and revenge all the patriotic and religious feelings of the chosen people. We are further told by Josephus on this occasion, that Pilate was so enraged at the opposition of the Jews to his measures, that he ordered the soldiers to attack a large number of them when assembled together in one district of the city, and to put them cruelly to the sword. This is the event to which our blessed Lord alludes, when he speaks of certain Galilæans "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." Luke xiii. 1, 2. Indeed, Pilate was beyond all question characterized by a reckless obstinacy, an insatiable covetousness, a mean servility to power, and a disposition so relentlessly cruel, that it led him to give vent to his passions by punishing alike the innocent and the guilty, and to put his subjects to death without so much as the semblance of a trial. Ambition and the desire to please the reigning Emperor, were his ruling motives of action; and yet so little success did all his politic and ambitious schemes meet with, that within the space of three years after the death of our Saviour, Pilate, for his cruelty and oppression, was deposed from the governorship of Judea, and was banished by the Emperor Caligula to Vienne in Gaul, where extreme poverty and distress of mind soon influenced him to follow the examples of Judas and of Herod Antipas, by putting a wretched period to his own life. "The sorrow of the world worketh death." "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

Such was the man before whom the sentence of the Jewish council, condemning the blessed Jesus, was brought for confirmation or reversal. Pilate readily took up the cause, and forthwith entered upon an examination of the charge brought against Jesus by the council. Having heard the cause, and having put several questions to the illustrious individual who stood before him in the character of a pannel, he solemnly declares his conviction of the perfect innocence of the accused: "I find no fault in him at all," says he; and repeatedly pressed his acquittal upon the violent accusers who now stood around his tribunal. What he could not do by means of a simple decision, he attempts to accomplish by a series of rather singular expedients. He first attempts to prevail on the Jews to allow him to release Jesus by an act of mercy common at the great festival. When this could not be accomplished, he, in the next place, endeavours to free himself of all his difficulties and perplexities, by transferring Jesus to the jurisdiction of Herod the viceroy of Galilee, to whose government he alleged that Jesus properly belonged. This expedient likewise failed; for Herod, after treating the innocent Saviour with every mark of indignant cruelty, sent him back to Pilate, whose last expedient to settle the case was the most singular of all. "I find no fault in him," says he, "I will therefore chastise him and let him go:" a most extraordinary practical application of the fact, that Jesus was perfectly innocent! By the acknowledgment of the governor himself, the pri-

sooner was free from blame; and, *therefore*, he was to be subjected, if not to a cruel death, at least to an ignominous infliction of stripes. He actually carried his proposal into execution, and having delivered Jesus to be scourged by the Roman soldiers in the cruel manner then customary in the treatment of the basest criminals, he brought him forth to the people as an object of sympathy, in the hope that now their revenge would be in some measure satiated, and that they would consent to the sparing of his life. "Behold the man!" says he, and makes a vain appeal to the dormant feelings of an enraged multitude, whose hearts were hard, and whose tender mercies were cruelty. This last expedient having failed, Pilate tamely yields to the vehemence of the infuriated mob; and, as the words of our text inform us, "When he saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." His ingenuity in devising expedients was at length exhausted; and the only thing that now remained for him was the foolish and ridiculous attempt to screen himself from blame, and to throw the odium of the infamous deed entirely upon the people.

The *reasons* why Pilate yielded at last to the raging passions of the multitude, were chiefly these two:—first, the fear of an insurrection in Jerusalem, had not the blessed Jesus, though confessedly an innocent victim, been given up to the rancour and malignant cruelty of the scribes, and rulers, and people at large; and, secondly, the apprehension that, had he acquitted Jesus, a complaint would have been lodged against him at the imperial tribunal, and he must thus have been deprived of his honours and his place. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Poor infatuated man! did he suppose that a little water sprinkled on the hands *can* wash away the heinous crime of violating his own conscience, and tamely sacrificing to self-interested views the substantial claims of justice and of truth? Short-sighted, indeed, were his views of the matter; for three years did not elapse before the very thing he now dreaded was realized, and the cruelty which had rendered him infamous to all, brought upon him the indignation of that very Cæsar whom he now wished to please; and he was rewarded for all his services to the imperial dynasty with deposition from his government, and banishment for life. The punishment of a man's crimes often meets him, even in this life, much more swiftly than an awakened and terrified conscience could have at all anticipated; and the revolving pages of the volume of providence lay before us many affecting illustrations of this truth—"Be sure your sins shall find you out."

II. Let us now attend to the practical improvement of the sketch now given of the history and character of Pontius Pilate.

1st. The facts of the case are strikingly illustrative and confirmatory of the natural supremacy of conscience.

In all the works of God we discover a fitness of means for the accomplishment of certain ends. The eye, we have no doubt, was designed to be the instrument of vision, because we see, from the admirable contrivance which its mechanism discovers in every individual, that it is fitted in a singularly wise and efficient manner for the purpose in view. The ear, we doubt not, was intended to be the organ of hearing; and we derive our conviction of this from the wise adaptation of the instrument to the purposes of its end. So it is in the world of intellect, and in the moral kingdom. Each of the mental powers, be it perception, or consciousness, or judgment, or memory, or taste, is capable of producing a certain effect in regard to the intellectual progress and improvement of mankind; and hence we draw the necessary inference, that the great Creator designed these faculties to be the instruments of mental culture. In like manner, we find that man as a moral being, has a capacity by which he discriminates right from wrong in actions and in habits, in a manner somewhat analogous to that by which he discriminates the qualities of taste in external objects; and we feel ourselves thus warranted to draw the inference, that this capacity was designed to be the regulator of man in all matters connected with obligation and duty. St. Paul recognises it even in the heathen, blinded and impure as they were, when he says of them, "that having not the law," they nevertheless "show the works of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience bearing witness*, and their thoughts, the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another."

In the case of Pilate before us, we have a very striking instance of the supremacy of conscience, even in a wicked man. Perverted by bad principles, and devoted to the purposes of his own selfish and cruel ambition, this man was nevertheless unable to set aside the dictates, or to stifle the potent voice of conscience within him. In judging of the character and conduct of the blessed Jesus, his appeal was still made to the grand distinction between right and wrong, in character and in action; and willing as he was to do so he could not, with all his sophistry, turn aside the testimony of truth, nor shut his ears to the verdict which his own conduct pronounced. Conscience, even in the breast of a bad man, takes precedence of all other powers, and sits enthroned. It is the voice of God within the human breast, appealing to the essential, and eternal, and immutable distinction between right and wrong, virtuous and vicious in action; calling on us to recognise that distinction, and to act rigidly and strictly upon it. It is this, indeed, which above all other things marks out man's superiority over the brute creation, and constitutes his high prerogative as the responsible subject of God's holy administration. It is this that lies at the foundation of all civil and judicial authority, pervades the whole system of municipal and commercial polity, prescribes the rules by which magistrates are to be regulated in their official actings, and by which subjects are to be guided and controlled in their relative departments, as members of one social community. Had this principle been left to perish amid the ruins of man's moral greatness, human nature must have ceased to be, and the world would have been for ever reduced to a chaos of moral disorder. Nothing but this can hold society together, or give strength, and beauty, and virtue to the social tie. Revelation, so far from superseding the principle of conscience, pre-supposes it; appeals to it throughout, and seeks just to declare it to that power which appetite and passion have impaired, and to the undisturbed possession of those privileges which inferior principles have combined to infringe. Indeed, if the supremacy of conscience is not to be held as an unalienable and ultimate principle in our nature, you can never prove that infidelity is a crime, seeing you can never prove that man violates any obligation, or transgresses any primary law, when he, with proud and contemptuous scorn, refuses even to examine into the evidence, the authority, and the import of a revelation from God.

2d. The malignant power of selfish and interested passions.

In the breast of a bad man, conscience, it is true, does make its voice to be heard; and we not unfrequently meet with instances in which even the very basest of men are compelled by that principle to do homage to what is pure, and dignified, and lovely, in characters of distinguished goodness. Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, is one instance of this; for even he, exasperated as he was, by the pointed reproof of the harbingers of Christ, nevertheless "feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy." Pilate, in the case before us, presents another example of the same thing, for we find him not only convinced in his own mind of the innocence of Jesus, but *overawed* by the calm majesty of the innocent pannel at the bar, and standing forth as his public advocate. In all this we have a most valuable testimony to the excellence of the Saviour's personal character, and to the truth of his claims as the messenger of God. Pilate, like Judas the traitor, stands forth to our view as a most fair and impartial witness in favour of the christian cause; and even the voice of an enemy is lifted up in its defence. But, alas! how affecting the power of selfish passions! and how melancholy the picture of human nature as exhibited in Pilate! Whatever may be his convictions of conscience, and his sense of the innocence of Jesus; and however strong his desire to procure his liberation, all must give way before the overwhelming torrent of those passions and interests which swayed his soul, and gave the tone and the character to his habits! It is not ignorance of duty, neither is it the want of conscience to discriminate, neither is it in every instance a deliberate intention previously fixed, that leads men aside from the plain paths of rectitude. It is the influence of selfish and sinful desires—the overpowering control of appetite and passion in the mind of an impure being—it is this that darkens and perverts the moral perceptions of men, and drives them on, by a kind of irresistible impulse, to the perpetration of deeds which their conscience nevertheless condemns, and which they have not the impious boldness to vindicate. It is the

"deceitfulness of sin" which "hardens" the heart; and it is "the god of this world which blinds the mind of them which believe not;" and it is the Spirit of all grace alone who can vindicate the powers of man from this impious and degrading control.

3d. The evil of unsanctified ambition.

We say *unsanctified* ambition, because there is an ambition that partakes of a holy or sanctified ambition—the ambition, if you will permit me the use of such a term, for such a connexion of excellence in general, and of excellence, particularly in that department which we may have chosen to ourselves—the ambition to rise high in the estimation of our own consciences, of God, and of all good men—the ambition to be really useful in the world as the humble but efficient benefactors of the temporal and spiritual interests of mankind. How affecting the contrast between an ambition like this, if ambition it can be called, and that which reigned supreme in the breast of Pontius Pilate. His grand aim was to stand well with those to whom he owed his elevation to the governorship of Judea, and whom he still courted in the hope of farther honours. Conscience would no doubt tell him that he had been guilty of many acts of maladministration, and that in all probability an official report of these, laid before the higher powers, might at once hurl him from his ill-acquired eminence, and subject him to condign punishment. He knew also that the death of Jesus was keenly desired by the priests, by the Sanhedrim, and by the great voice of the grievously misled public. And in order to gratify this desire, and to please Cæsar, and to show that he was zealous of the royal prerogative, and alive to every thing which might endanger it in the esteem of the people, he meanly sacrifices his conscience to his ambition, and madly barters away his soul for that which, notwithstanding, eluded his grasp, and left him to all the horrors of shipwreck on the enchanted land of hope.

4th. The necessity and the duty of a strict adherence to the plain dictates of truth and *rectitude* in every situation.

The case of Pilate suggests strongly the necessity and duty of a strict adherence to rectitude in those who are called to occupy public stations, as senators, or as judges, or as rulers in the land. Had Pilate been influenced by the love of rectitude, and the true ambition to render his government equitous and benign, he would have eagerly embraced the opportunity of vindicating injured innocence; of rescuing it from the ruthless grasp of unprincipled fury; and of appealing, in the tone of firm and manly remonstrance, to the peerless claims of justice and of truth. So far from this, he tampers with both; he enters into a parley with their sworn foes; and, after a very feeble resistance, he surrenders at discretion. Expediency was the watchword; and crooked policy led him to give, in exchange for a short-lived popular applause, the peace of his own blood-stained conscience, and the life of the innocent and holy Jesus!

5th. The folly of those schemes which men devise as *covers* for their sins. "He that *covereth* his sins shall not prosper."

Pilate, throughout his whole conduct, acts on a system of false morality, and manifests clearly, and in the most appalling colours, the deceitfulness of sin. He is convinced, beyond all doubt, of the innocence of Jesus; and, in order to save his life, he proposes to subject him, though innocent, to an ignominious and painful punishment. He farther offers to release him, on two conditions equally improper, namely, that the innocent Jesus should be ranked among guilty criminals, in order that he might gain the benefit of the act of grace; and that the consent of the Jews must be gained before the act of mercy should be passed in his favour—a thing which he must have known it was impossible to obtain. When these expedients failed, he at length yields to the popular clamour, and delivers Jesus to be crucified, while, with matchless effrontery, he declares his innocence of the crime of shedding "innocent blood," and washes his hands in token of that innocence! What awful infatuation! What Jesuitical chicanery! What an appalling and degrading instance of hypocrisy and self-deceit! It reminds us of the conduct ordinarily pursued by the judges in the Court of Inquisition in Spain, when they deliver over their hapless victims to the civil powers, with a solemn and serious admonition that they will be pleased to treat them with gentleness; while they know full well that their giving over the victim is just equivalent to the passing of a sentence of condemnation; that the civil magistrate is only the executioner of their hellish decrees; and that the "*gentleness*"

recommended is neither more nor less than a committal to the flames! Pilate attempts to draw a distinction between *passing a sentence*, and the *giving effect* to a sentence which he had it in his power to prevent; not perceiving that it was just as criminal to *confirm* and *carry out* the decision of the council, as it would have been to pass the same decision by his own direct authority. He *homologated* the deed, and this fixes the stigma upon him with a clearness of lineament which all his subterfuges will never efface.

6th. Lastly; the history and character of Pontius Pilate teaches the wisdom of God, in overruling the passions of men to the advancement of his own holy and benevolent designs. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him." It was the determinate counsel "of God, that Jesus should die for the salvation of a ruined world; that his blood should be shed as an oblation to vindicate divine justice, and to satisfy the demands of law; and that his *death* should be the *life* of the world." In order to the accomplishment of this great and gracious design of God, instruments every way qualified for the purpose of bringing it about were put and kept in requisition. The Jews, moved with envy and with malice, and still acting *most freely* according to their own inclinations, delivered up Jesus to be crucified; and Pilate, acting likewise with the most perfect freedom, enters into their views, and ratifies the sentence which they had already passed by anticipation. Had it so happened that the governor of Judea was a man of firmness of nerve, as well as integrity of principle, his refusal to ratify the sentence might have interposed a very serious obstacle in the way of its execution; while, on the other hand, had Pilate yielded all at once to the wishes of the people, the world and the church would have been deprived of that decisive attestation to the innocence of Jesus, and the truth of his claims, which the conduct of Pilate, as exhibited in the sacred page, has unequivocally furnished. We see in all this the consummate wisdom of God, in accomplishing his own wise and holy purposes in a way most agreeable to his own character, and by means of instruments either originally fitted or rendered fit by a combination of circumstances, for the end in view. Men of the most opposite and inconsistent qualities are kept together on the stage of the world and of time, and, after acting their part in the great drama of things, are removed to make way for their successors. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Amen.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. RICHARD MARTIN, A.B., Greenock.
DISCOURSE by the Rev. GRAHAM MITCHELL, A.M., Whitburn.

THE SUBJECT, MANNER, AND END OF ST. PAUL'S PREACHING;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. RICHARD MARTIN, A.B.
Greenock.

'*Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*"—COL. i. 28.

THE apostolic commission embraces a widely extended field of usefulness. It directs that its ministers should "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It was by this principle that St. Paul was guided, in his publication of the blessed truths of the Gospel. All men, without any exception of name or nation, were the objects of his solicitude, and the subjects of his deepest anxiety. He understood the extent of his commission, and the obligation he was under to preach to all, whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear. It was his duty to plant the good seed of the Word in the great field of the world; but it belonged to God alone to water that seed with the dew of his holy Spirit, and to make it productive of an abundant crop. The Lord alone knew to whom he would make it effectual; but as St. Paul was ignorant of the objects of his choice, he therefore preached the Word of Life to all, and left the issue, following it however with prayer, in the hands of his divine Master. He preached to every man within his reach, that by all means he might be made the happy instrument of saving some, and that he might be blessed with the lofty privilege of being permitted to rejoice that he had not run or laboured in vain. Few, indeed, comparatively speaking, of the mighty mass to whom he preached, had had their hearts opened to receive his testimony. But the number was sufficiently large to afford a ground of rejoicing, and served to encourage him to declare to every man the glad tidings of great joy. As St. Paul saw the benefit of this general and unrestricted application of the Word of God, he also was fully aware of the benefit of making it personally applicable to each individual. He, therefore, taught them not only publicly, but from house to house. Thus bringing the Word of Life within the reach of all, he delivered his own soul, was free from the blood of all men; and had just reason to hope that the more general his preaching, the greater would be the number of seals to the ministry with which he had been put in trust. He was also fully aware that the greater would be the glory which would redound to the beloved Saviour whose word he preached, and whose invitations of love and mercy were thus so widely scattered abroad, and made known to every man to whom he delivered his testimony. Having on the last Sabbath,* in illustration of the first part of this text, directed your attention to the subject of the Apostle's preaching, I purpose, with God's blessing, to make the manner and end of his preaching the subject of this afternoon's discourse.

The manner in which he acted in the execution of this duty, is worthy of particular attention. He warned every man of his danger, and instructed every man in all wisdom.

The danger to which man is exposed as a sinner, is sufficient to awaken the deepest anxiety in the hearts of those that are aware of his situation. To the minister of God it must be, and always is, a subject of painful thought, that so many of those amongst whom he ministers are still so plainly in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Realizing, as he does, the awful realities of

* See Vol. III. p. 97.

a future state of retribution, and marking the path of sinners as they move on step by step to their own place, he cannot but feel fearfully heart-struck at the apathy which covers them as a garment, and the coldness with which they look upon the things of an eternal and unseen world. There are none more blind to their real danger than the subjects of it; the light shines clearly around them, but they are in a state of impenetrable darkness. Tell such that they are treading in the path that leads to hell, and they will accuse you of uncharitableness or enthusiasm, and reject your advice with derision and contempt. As well might a man who was about to step ignorantly from the brink of a precipice into irremediable destruction, accuse the individual who stopped him on the way, of uncharitableness and enthusiasm: as well might he reject the kind advice of his anxious friend, and push on without consideration and reflection, as that the sinner should reject the warning voice of one who is well aware of his danger, even though he himself is ignorant of it. But yet experience, no less than the Word of God, testifies that this is too often the unhappy condition of the sinner, and that few, indeed, are the exceptions to this general description. St. Paul knew this to be the state of those whom he addressed, and therefore boldly and faithfully warned them of their imminent danger. He fully explained to them the evil nature of sin, and testified that the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." He warned them that they were all by nature the children of wrath, and, therefore, that it became them to flee to the ark of God for safety. And who can dare to say that there was either enthusiasm or uncharitableness in this conduct. No, my brethren, he was a watchman that knew his responsibility, as well as the value of the soul; and, consequently, warned the wicked that he might be led to turn from his wickedness and save his life; and that he himself might possess the happy assurance that he had delivered his own soul.

But he spoke not only to the sinner in a voice of warning, but also to the true believer. Who could better express than St. Paul, the danger to which the believer is exposed, both from inward and outward foes? If sin be beaten from one corner of the heart, it will betake itself to another: if it appear to hide its evil head at the approach of danger, it will push it forth again when the danger is removed. It entwines its secret influence around the new-born heart, and endeavours at every opportunity to regain the ground it has lost, and to bring it again into captivity to its indwelling power. Against such an enemy it is necessary that the true believer be strongly armed. It is an enemy within the citadel, and, therefore, continually at hand to take advantage of every unguarded act, and unwatchful moment. Surely, then, St. Paul would have been wanting in his instructions, if he had not warned his disciples of their danger. He, therefore, exhorted Timothy to flee such things as were likely to give advantage to this evil, and to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

There are also the dangers which arise from the snares and temptations of an evil world—a world lying in sin, whose principles, and motives, and actions, are in direct opposition to the well-being of the believer, and to his enjoyment of spiritual blessings. Of the believer, St. Paul says, "that he has not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God;" and that instead of following the spirit of the former, that it is his duty to follow the dictates of the latter, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; and gives us an awful warning of the danger that arises from this source in the conduct of Demas, who, having loved this present world, forsook him and departed unto Thessalonica. Conformity to the world is, in fact, totally at variance with a strict conformity to the rules and principles of the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus. The one is pure, the other is impure; the one at enmity with God, the other the means by which this enmity is removed. It is, consequently, as impossible that the believer can agree with both of these, as that a piece of iron which is at one time in fire, and at another time in water, can at all times possess the same degree of temperature.

The power which both sin and the world still possess over the heart of the believer, gives Satan, the arch enemy of our souls, an immense advantage, and strengthens his ability to tempt to evil. He is constantly on the watch for our destruction, and is too well practised an enemy to lose sight of such useful emissaries in his contest with us. St. Paul was too well aware of his ability in this respect, and of his evil machinations, not to guard against them. In his instruction to the Corinthians, as to the conduct which they should pursue towards the professing Christian who had sinned, but now had become penitent, he directs that they should forgive him, and that he himself would unite in this forgiveness, assigning as

his reason lest Satan should get an advantage, for he says we are not ignorant of his devices. In his epistle to the Ephesians, vi. 11, he shows his dread of this enemy, by directing his readers to put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of Satan; and then adds that beautiful description of the whole armour of God, which it is only necessary for us to put on and use, and we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Besides warning them of their danger, he also instructed them in all wisdom, in the things pertaining to eternal life. There is no subject of which we are so completely ignorant in our natural and unrenewed condition, as that of religion. The false opinions and erroneous views which some even of professing Christians attach themselves to, evidently prove the truth of this assertion. The world by its wisdom never could have arrived at the knowledge of the true God, or discover its obligations to serve him, much less the manner in which this duty is to be fulfilled. Men could only know themselves to be sinners by the information they derived from the law of nature; "their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." But it could afford them no clue to a way of pardon for their sins, and admission to the favour of their offended God. The instruction of the Apostle removed these difficulties, and opened to them a mine of knowledge from which they might be enriched with all wisdom, and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He brought before them that wisdom which cometh down from above, and laid open to them the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto their glory. But clearly and brightly as the light of revelation now shines among us, it is to the true believer alone that the doctrines of salvation appear wisdom. They are foolishness to those whose spiritual perception is blinded by the god and prince of this world, however clearly they may behold, by the eye of the natural man, the system of divine truths which have been revealed. The same gracious spirit that revealed these truths at the first, must now remove the veil which overshadows our souls, and bestow upon us a spiritual perception, before we can practically esteem them as true and heavenly wisdom.

Having thus illustrated the subject and manner of the Apostle's preaching, it now remains for us to consider,

The end of his preaching.

The ultimate end which the Apostle had in view was, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. He desired no greater reward for his labour, than that he might present them blameless at the day of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. To forward this great and good object, he was unwearied in his exertions, and undismayed in his career, even though he had to contend against the prejudices and ingratitude of some, and the enmity and persecuting spirit of others. Difficulties arose as he pressed forward, both from friends and foes. He yielded not, however, to either, but held on in one uniform course of action, and manfully contended, under the banner of Christ, against all the opposition he experienced. Had he not been supported by some better principle than mere worldly motives, he could not have thus withstood such united and severe trials. But the contest in which he was engaged, was the contest of God; and the object of his contention the glory of the Lord, as well as the best interests of his fellow-creatures. He sought to present the objects of his care and solicitude perfect in Christ Jesus, that they might at the last day "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." The perfection of which he here speaks, is not that of perfect freedom from sin in this life, which is never arrived at; but means that completeness in Christ Jesus, by which the perfect salvation of soul and body shall be obtained at the great and final day of judgment. It is the being clothed with the justifying robes of Christ's righteousness, and the being sanctified by his Holy Spirit. It is the being in Christ by a living faith, which removes the guilt of sin and destroys its power. It is the having our names written in the Book of Life, and our sins blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. It is, in fine, that union with Christ spoken of in Scripture, by which we are looked upon by God as perfect and entire, wanting nothing. St. Paul's heart's desire was, that his people might attain to this perfection, so as that there might be now no condemnation to them, and that they might hereafter enjoy the favour of God and everlasting life. He preached the doctrine of salvation, that they might be perfect in knowledge; he warned them of the evil of sin, and led them to the only hope of the sinner, that they might endeavour perfectly to avoid the one, and to embrace the other. He taught them to esteem the true wisdom that was revealed in Christ, and to seek for the spirit of wisdom within themselves, that they might be perfect in faith and holiness,

so that when they appeared in the presence of God, he might not behold spot or blemish upon them. He sought to present them perfect in the sight of God in glory, redeemed from sin, and purified from all iniquity, objects worthy of the Lord's highest favour and richest blessings, meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. So long as he could succeed in directing their attention to the cross of the Redeemer, and in leading them to an implicit reliance upon his mediation, he knew that they were attaining to that which could alone render them perfectly acceptable in the sight of God, and that he himself was obtaining the end of his ministry. He was not ignorant of the deceitfulness of the heart of man, and therefore anxiously watched over his sons in the gospel of Christ, lest they should be by any means turned from the course in which he directed them to press forward towards the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus. And what more glorious object could he desire, than that the souls rescued by his instrumentality from the power of Satan should grow up together with himself as a holy priesthood unto the Lord? What could he wish more, than so to present himself and the spiritual children which God had given him, that he might be prepared to sit down with them in the mansions which the Lord Jesus had gone before to provide for them in his eternal kingdom of rest and glory? With what joy would he look upon those who had been before the objects of his anxious care and attention, as now beyond the reach of all anxiety, and sharing with him the full and unveiled happiness of heaven! With them he had weathered the storm, had shared the hardships of the voyage, had passed over the troubled ocean of this life, and with them had entered into the haven of promised rest. Surely the dangers and hardships, the trials and sufferings of the voyage, would now be more than rewarded by their safe and happy arrival in that country, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." If St. Paul at such a time could remember the trials and sufferings which he endured whilst engaged in the work of the ministry, it would be only to express his joy and thanksgiving, as he did when on earth, that the Lord counted him worthy to suffer in so good a cause, and that he is now permitted to share in that promise of God—"that those that were wise should shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those that turned many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

In conclusion, I would apply the subjects now discussed.

Dear brethren, what are the feelings produced within your minds when the Apostle's manner of preaching is applied to you? When the truth as it is in Jesus is declared plainly and faithfully, do you rejoice in this plainness, and apply to yourselves this faithfulness? Do you make it the decided end of your hearing not to cavil at the manner in which the truths are declared, but to profit by those truths, and follow out in your lives and experience the information you thereby acquire? The minister who follows the example of St. Paul must warn you of your danger. Beware of slighting this warning, lest you be found like to those who, under the preaching of Noah, went on, in opposition to his instruction, in sin and indifference, and were compelled to feel the truth of his warning in the destruction which overtook them. I would beseech you, as you value your immortal souls, to pause before you refuse the warning I now give you. It may be the last time I shall be privileged to give, or you to hear this warning of your danger. Defer not its consideration to what you call a more convenient season; for "the present is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation;" and you know not what changes a day may bring forth. I would encourage you at this moment, sinners, as you are, to "come boldly to the throne of grace," that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Be not discouraged under the impression that you have so long continued uninfluenced by the word of warning, but ask of Him who has promised it, to take away the heart of stone, and to give you a heart of flesh; and if you persevere and faint not, you shall in due time receive from him an encouraging assurance of his love and favour.

And to you, my dear brethren, who have already been brought under the power of the gospel of Christ, the warning also reaches, not that you might be discouraged, but that you might be kept watchful against your enemies, and dependent upon that God who, as he has begun the good work within you, must himself continue to carry it on unto perfection. Let no success persuade you that your enemies are completely worsted; for, be assured, they are as watchful for your halting, as if you had never quenched a dart they had aimed against you. They are represented as watchful enemies, and you are consequently commanded, as the only means of defence, to watch and pray, that you enter not into

temptation. Let the warning of the Apostle, then, be with you continually, that you may finish your course with joy, and at last be found in Christ perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Again, consider the end of the Apostle's preaching, and ask yourselves, Has that end been accomplished in you? He desired to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. If the command were now to come forth from the throne of the most High God, "This night thy soul is required of thee," what, I would ask, is the condition in which it would find you? Could you lay your hands upon your hearts, as you stood before the judgment-seat of Heaven, and say, that it found you perfect in Christ Jesus, or even that you sought, earnestly sought for that perfection in the use of appointed means. Thrice blessed is the soul that possesses this happy confidence; happy, thrice happy shall it be when admitted into its eternal rest, and enjoys the complete fruition of those inconceivable blessings which are now seen by the eye of faith as through a glass darkly. But wretched, deplorably wretched, must be the feelings of that soul which is hurried into the presence of its Maker, under the self-condemning impression that it neither possesses the perfection of the saints, or sought to possess it when time and opportunity permitted. Earnestly would I pray that each of you whom I now address might be found perfect and entire, wanting nothing, at the great day of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that I might be permitted to present you together with myself as "vessels meet for the Master's use," and prepared to enjoy "the crowns of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day unto all that love his appearing." May God for Christ's sake grant this. Amen.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION;

A DISCOURSE,

By the Rev. GRAHAM MITCHELL, A.M.,
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He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."—HEB. vii. 26.

WHILE the sacred writers inform us that "Jesus Christ the Righteous" came into the world to save sinners, and to take upon him our infirmities, they are most careful to tell us that he himself was without sin. "If ye know," says his beloved disciple, "that *He* is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as *He* is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And to the same effect we are also told that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in *Him* is no sin. Is Christ, then, the minister of sin? God forbid. Among the many heretical and speculative opinions at present afloat, none can be more unscriptural and dangerous than those which have recently been broached respecting our Lord's humanity. To ascribe to that exalted and pure nature the smallest degree of imperfection or sin, saps the foundations of revelation, and our consequent security and hopes, that "God is just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly who come to believe in Jesus." But the view of the subject which we now submit for consideration is, that the second Adam behoved to be sinless, that he might stand unsubdued, and do away the evils of the first departure of our race from innocence and peace.

Ever since order and beauty arose out of chaos, only two who might properly be termed perfect beings, have appeared in our world. They were both the Representatives, though not equally successful, of a multitude which no man can number, of every nation, and people, and language, and tongue. The first Adam was of the earth, earthy. The other the Lord from heaven, produced not out of nothing, or of the dust, but conceived in a supernatural and miraculous manner by the direct power and overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. A question now presents itself to our view, whether from the nature of each of these sponsors they were placed in a situation equally perilous; or whether we are to understand that the one, from his very nature, was exposed to greater danger by his trial than the other? The solution of this point, it must be allowed, involves consequences the most momentous. Undoubtedly the first Adam, formed after the divine image in

knowledge and in righteousness, was perfect in the whole man, both as to soul and body. He was, therefore, in most auspicious circumstances, in order that he might remain steadfast in his state of probation and innocence as our Covenant Head. He was also at once brought into a condition of full maturity; whereas it was otherwise with him who was the Lord from Heaven, when he became a man. That in every point he might be like us, with the exception of sin, he was born a babe, underwent all the weaknesses peculiar to our infantine years, and passed in progression through the very steps that we do from youth to manhood. His human understanding increased with his years. As man, his wisdom and knowledge could not be infinite or incapable of increase. Hence we are informed by the evangelist Luke, what was foretold by a prophetic voice,* that the child "grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom;" and also that he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Luke ii. 40, 52.

Now, he behoved to be thus like us in advancing to maturity; yet his whole thoughts, sayings, and doings, through all the progression to which he submitted, were in entire conformity to the divine will and commands. It is not, however, for creatures so limited in faculties as we are, to speculate as to the manner in which the indwelling Deity imparted wisdom and holiness to the unblemished human nature, especially since a writer under the influence of inspiration tells us, in reference to this truth of God manifested in human flesh, that it is a "great mystery." Still it is satisfactory for us to know, that, from the very first formation of his humanity, he was pure, being conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; and that it was the divine Logos, the Word, that was made flesh, which could not possibly have come in contact with imperfection and impurity. In consequence of this, vastly different has been the result in reference to us as united to our heavenly Representative and great High Priest. By means of the first Adam, there is conveyed to all of us, as his posterity, a corrupt and sinful principle. Through the second Adam there is communicated to us, who are his genuine disciples, a principle of sanctification and holiness in the whole man. Is it reasonable to suppose that this could have been the case, if our divine Redeemer had not been possessed of holiness in his human nature; but had, on the contrary, been contaminated like those lost creatures, whom he came to seek and to save? By an ambassador from the heavenly mansions, it was announced that the nature of the new-born King of the Jews was *holy*. What, then, though the first Adam might have an advantage by being made at once in the full maturity of all his faculties? Christ's sinless powers, under the immediate and inseparable agency of Godhead, were gradually developed; for the union of the two natures in Christ subsisted together without confusion, being the only and well-beloved Son of God, before all worlds, and from all eternity. These two natures acted in unison, the humanity always under the entire will of Deity; for Christ did not his own will, but the will of Him that sent him. Such was the harmony between them, that Christ said, while on earth, that the Son of Man is in heaven. And how could this be, but by a personal union of the two natures of deity and humanity? Of course, his body, when he spoke the remarkable words just quoted, was then on earth, limited to the particular spot it occupied. The divine nature belonging to him alone was in heaven, to which his humanity was mysteriously linked; for, though his human powers were gradually unfolded, we have unquestionable authority to say, that in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; that he and his Father are one; that the Word was God, which men were permitted to behold; and that while no man has seen God at any time, the only begotten of the Father hath declared him. From these statements, then, it appears, that much of the heresy upon the doctrine of our Lord's humanity arises from considering our Holy Redeemer abstractly, and in endeavouring to separate in theory what cannot be separated in reality, without hiding from human view the perfectness of each grace, and the symmetry of the whole of his adorable character, and rendering our spotless Saviour altogether a different person from him who possessed what no other being ever did, two distinct natures in one person, without any alloy or any confusion, so as to constitute him truly God-man.†

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* Isaiah.

† I saw him ere the universe began,
When space was worldless, luminously fill'd
With emanations of vast Deity:
I saw him when immensity his voice
Obey'd, and nothing started into worlds.

MONTGOMERY'S *Poem, entitled "Satan.*

Had the Lord our righteousness been man,* of a sinful nature, that he must have proved for us an unsuccessful Representative is but too evident, when we reflect that the trial of Christ Jesus was of a severer nature than that endured by Adam; for whilst our first progenitor had merely one object placed before his eyes as a trial of obedience, and yet fell from the holy and happy state wherein he was first created, the Man of sorrows had a continued indescribable conflict of sufferings, from the manger to his crowning act of obedience in Gethsemane and on the cross. If sin had been interwoven in his nature, it would have manifested something of its existence; and surely in his interesting history, there were not wanting occasions awfully trying, when betrayed by a follower, deserted by friends, assailed by the powers of wickedness, and suffering an eclipse by the hidings of his Father's countenance in the hour and power of darkness. Had this holy and original character possessed a nature stained with sin, O! how comes it that the last Adam stood while the first irrecoverably fell? that the *one* brought to us condemnation, the *other* release? the one death, but the other life? It was for no other reason than that he who was "*anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power*," was placed by a union of two natures in one person in the most advantageous position, to stand as the Messenger of the Covenant to do the divine will and finish his work. It was because he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" that as by "the offence of one, judgment came upon all to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one, judgment might come upon all 'to justification.'" And if to attain this great end He was sanctified above measure, strengthened and continually sustained by an inseparable union between the divine and human natures, could He, we ask, have possibly failed in one single point, in securing the object of his inconceivably benevolent undertaking? Surely the union of divinity must have impressed the highest value on the sacrifice of his perfect humanity, by which alone we can understand how it is said that the church has been purchased with God's *own blood*—an expression according exactly with announcements in the divine record of a similar nature, especially where it is said, "that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among men; that it was God that was manifested in the flesh, even God over all, blessed for evermore." What was there to prevent our holy Surety taking upon him human nature† without any of the pollution by which human nature had become so foully degraded? Indeed, though we had not been able to conceive how he could, the warrant we have from Scripture for believing it, ought surely to be considered enough, since we are assured, that Christ "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared

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* "Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople, about the year 428, indulging that pride of corrupt reason which produces heresy, and lies," says Bishop Jolly, "at the root of every sin, because he could not comprehend how the divine and human nature could be united so as to make one only person in Christ, as neither can any one explain the union of his own soul and body so as to make one person in man, maintained, that the two natures make two persons—the one divine, and the other human, and that there was personal, inseparable union between them, the divinity only influencing the humanity; by this opinion overthrowing the saving doctrine of our redemption by the blood of God incarnate. In opposition to this dangerous heresy, which tended to subvert the whole mystery of man's redemption, and shake the firm foundation of our hopes, the 3d General Council, assembled at Ephesus in the year 431, declared the doctrine of the Church, as contained in Scripture, to be (as is expressed in that part of the Athanasian creed, which is opposed to Nestorianism), that our incarnate Lord, although he be God and man, is not two but one Christ, one not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ who suffered for our redemption. And as he was God while he hung upon the cross, so he was God while he lay in the womb of the blessed virgin, and was born of her."—Dr. M'Crie, in his History of the Reformation in Spain, merely adverts to the spread of Nestorianism, p. 8, and in p. 32, shows, that by means of the fanatics who propagated that and similar tenets, "the progress of the human mind in knowledge and civilization, which had commenced so auspiciously, was arrested and thrown back for ages."

† Had the character of Christ been a fiction of the sacred writers, a creature of their own fancy, they would have debased his divinity by attributing to him the passions and culpable weaknesses of mortals, or they would have exalted his human nature too high by majestic and overpowering displays of his divinity; but there is this singularity in his character as drawn by the Evangelists, that while he is elevated above all men by the uniform dignity of his behaviour, the wisdom of his discourses, and his miracles, which showed that all nature was obedient to his will, he is at the same time exhibited as subject to the sinless infirmities of our nature, and influenced by its innocent passions. Such a character commands at once our reverence and our love, our homage and our confidence, and is exactly suited to the idea of a person who unites to himself two natures so different as the divine and the human.—*Dick's Essay on Inspiration.*

to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness." By reason of this, we find Christ is held forth as a Lamb* without blemish and without spot." The paschal lamb was required to be free from blemish, and for this reason was set apart four days before it was offered, that it might be fully examined, and proved fit for its destined use, Exod. xii. 3; and well did it represent the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, which his harbinger declared taketh away the sin of the world. Hence his holy name "is as the ointment poured forth; for he is as the refiner's fire, the fuller's soap, and the purifier of silver," he is "the Righteous Branch," "the Good Shepherd that giveth his life for his sheep," "God's Righteous Servant who shall justify many," "Immanuel God with us, the Son of the Highest in whom he is well pleased;" so that whilst all that is now visible in the material universe shall finally disappear, or be changed into other forms, "His salvation shall endure for ever, and His righteousness shall not be abolished." We see, then, that though the second Adam was made man, still he was a sinless man; that he was the surety of sinners, and he required to be not himself personally a partaker of sin. He only suffered the punishment due to us for sin. How often has one man, as surety for another, become exposed to sufferings, without being personally criminal? In such a case, an innocent man, we see, does suffer for another, and is treated as if he had been principal. So the holy Jesus, though he himself neither sinned nor was liable to sin, was treated as our surety; for, by sacrifice and substitution,† "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree." The treatment which in consequence he received, was the treatment due to a sinner, nay, to a countless multitude of sinners, still it was not on his own account, but ours, because the sufferings he underwent were both voluntary and vicarious. Such being the case, the righteousness of Christ was as necessary as his atonement. This is farther evident, when we remember that the apostle John intimates a close connexion between the spotless character of the Holy One of God, and his adaptation for the work of our redemption in these words:—"Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin;" and by another sacred writer we are assured, that "he offered up himself without spot unto God."

But here let us consider for a little how it became requisite for this divine Personage to assume the nature of man, and to take upon him the *likeness* of sinful flesh. As it was man who had transgressed, it was necessary that the penalty should be paid by man—not that the punishment should be endured by a nature different from that which had fallen. Accordingly, that our iniquities might be all put to his account, and expiated by him, he took to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, and died, the just for the unjust.‡

Probably, had he interposed on behalf of intelligences of a higher order, instead of us who had sunk so low in the mire of sin, he would have assumed the nature of those intelligences. If, for instance, it had been the angels for whom he interposed, he would have taken to himself the angelic nature. At any rate, this is certain, that the holy Saviour became like us, that he might be our Goel, or near kinsman, one to whom the right of redemption indisputably belonged.§ He was made like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted, agreeably to the promise given immediately after the fall from primeval innocence, that the seed of the *woman* should bruise the serpent's head.

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* It is an interesting circumstance in the life of Missionary Martyn, that while labouring in Persia to prepare the way of the Lord, by translating the New Testament into that language, he happened, one day, to read a passage in which Christ is termed the Lamb of God. Some of the most learned of that country ridiculed the simile, and exulted in what they considered the superior designation of Ali, who is called the Lion of God. In answer, it was observed to them, the lion is an unclean beast, he preys on carcasses, he is fierce, destructive, and is man's enemy. But the lamb is gentle; you eat its flesh and wear its skin; it is meek and harmless. Could any thing, it has been well asked, so strikingly illustrate the religion of Mahomet and of Christ in their directly opposite qualities?

† Vide Davenant, De just. habit., p. 333. Outram shows that Christ was not a sinner, but only a sacrifice for sin:—"Quæ mala corpori illius inerant, ea non ipsa vitia nostra seu peccata proprie dicta, sed quæ passim in s. literis appellari solent, peccatorum nostrorum pœnæ erant.—Lib. ii. cap. ix. sect. 9. Non ut inde Peccator, sed hostia pro peccato constitueretur."

‡ The word which the Apostle uses, Phil. 18, 19, when he charges himself on Onesimus's account, is the same he used in reference to the foundation of our acceptance with God. Λογίσεθαι signifies "to reckon, or account;" and with a dative case, "to put to any one's account." This word is used ten times in Romans, chap. iv. *Vide* Tull. Justif. Paul. p. 81. "Vox Græca respondens imputationi non pancies quam *decies* reperitur in uno capite, Rom. iv.; ea autem est λογίζομαι, vel ejusdem familiæ ἐλλογουμαι, qua quidem ad imputationem notandum aptiorem mihi fateor minime succurrere."—(P. 81.)

§ Levit. xxv. 48.

Christ being thus made of a woman, he became our kinsman. "So both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one nature; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Every thing of man, all his powers and feelings, he took upon him, but without any thing of moral defilement, being, what is the very opposite of sinful, the holy living impress of Godhead; even the express image of *His* person, in whose all-comprehensive eye all worlds and systems are as the small dust in the balance. Between the person of Christ and his blessed work, between the inherent splendour and excellency of his character, and the exalted dignity of his station, there is therefore an intimate and beautiful connexion. If he had been only man, he would not have possessed sufficient merit to ransom one soul from the second death; or, had he come in the greatness of created might merely, though arrayed with bright and immaculate splendour, all would have been inadequate, because, even then, he would have been but a dependent being, one of the subjects of the divine government. And how could any such creature do more in the way of obedience than what he himself owed to the Ruler of the universe, on whom he must depend for all his glory, for unquestionably he would be under the highest obligations to him on his own account, just because of his absolute dependence on a superior Power? It must be evident, therefore, that, as the full exertion of his powers, and a complete obedience, were due from himself on his own behalf, he could have no merit that might be transferred to another. The righteousness of any mere creature, then, however exalted in the scale of existence, could not have afforded a satisfaction or compensation for disobedience to the perfect and unalterable will of Heaven. But even going on the supposition that one man might bear the punishment merited by another, he could only give body for body, and his temporal sufferings could only answer to the *temporal* release of the offender, but could do nothing for the noblest part of man—the immortal soul. Thus reason and revelation show us, that the being who would redeem another from misery and ruin by yielding a vicarious righteousness, must be one who is not himself under any obligations to obey, or to endure the penalty of the law on his own behalf. Apply this principle in reference to Christ Jesus, who undertook our cause, and you will see that he could not be chargeable with presumption or disaffection to the divine government, by his laying claim to the character of independence and self-existence; for he was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God." No exactions of a personal kind could have been required of Him who, of his own free choice, was made under the law, and who magnified it and made it honourable—that law which is holy, just and good; and so a new law was not necessary, but only a new nature or person to fulfil its requirements, as was effectually done by the second Adam, the great Sponsor of the covenant of grace. It required one, like itself, to be altogether perfect, for it is an unalterable standard.* Could this perfect and unchangeable law have been fulfilled, if the second Adam had not been altogether independent, holy, and divine, and thus placed in the most favourable circumstances to ensure our salvation? But we are to remember, that Christ not only required to be independent and self-existent, to make an atonement at all, but also to be a person of the highest worth, in consequence of the demerit of sin as an offence against all the glorious perfections of infinite and unblemished purity, whose name is *holy*, and who is altogether glorious in holiness; and this being an unchangeable perfection of his nature, it would seem that a Redeemer was required, equal in dignity and worth to the Mighty Being offended, and to the extent of the evil committed. But who in heaven or earth could be fit for the undertaking but the incarnate God, the Man that was Jehovah's fellow! None but one Being so exalted and unspotted could be found adequate to repair the breach made by the first transgressor, or make up for the sad catastrophe of the introduction of moral evil, by sustaining as our surety the countless millions of sins committed by the many millions of generations, within the long interval between banishment from Eden, and the shout of the archangel and the trump of God. No one can imagine that this atonement was the arbitrary act of a severe or unfeeling Judge; for it was the unavoidable result of the holiness and perfection of the divine nature; and so soon as mercy became com-

* "Accedit hæc quoque ratio, quod nihil in justificationis negotio valeat, nisi quod perfectum plane sit, et legi Dei in omnibus respondeat. Nam in justificatione est ἰδιωξις δικαιοσύνης τοῦ Θεοῦ, Rom. iii. 25, 26. Illa autem exigit, ut δικαιωμα τοῦ νομου πληρωθῇ, Rom. viii. 4. Non potest impleri legis jus nisi *perfecta obedientia*."—Wits. (Œconom. lib. iii. cap. viii. sec. 42.

patible with justice, a sweet-smelling odour arose from the sacrifice of Christ, before that righteous God in whose eye even the heavens are not pure, and who chargeth his angels with folly, whilst they veil their faces with their wings, crying, Holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty! Thus the obedience of the second Adam was in worth what his person is in dignity, while the evil of sin has been unspeakably displayed in the very method adopted and accomplished for the sinner's acquittal on the part of the just God and Saviour, who, as an everlasting memorial of what has been done for man, shall wear for ever the garb of human nature. Well, then, may all of us adopt the beautiful language of the evangelical prophet, and say, "in the Lord have I righteousness;" or, as it is in the original, "*righteousnesses*,"* all that fulness of righteousness which we can possibly need. We may now ask, Could our Lord, in whom the Father was well pleased, possibly have possessed a sinful nature, since sin is pronounced to be "that abominable thing that God hates?"† But, then, you may here put the question, Can the Majesty in the heavens forego none of his rights? We think that there can be no doubt that he may: from the circumstance of having a right to punish the sinner, he conferred, by pardon, a right to impunity; "but," says Howe, "he cannot forego his rights, to the dishonour of his glorious excellences, and dignity of his holy government." He is so absolute that he can do whatever he pleases; but so just, that he cannot be pleased to do an unrighteous thing. It seems, then, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot do any thing but what accords with the honour and glory of all his perfections;‡ and how could a sinful and rebellious nature harmonize with these? how, in his flesh, destroy the enmity that existed? how pay to justice a debt which, had finite creatures like us been left to pay, never could have come to an end? Matt. v. 26.

Indeed, throughout the sacred pages, we never find holiness in the least iota abated, nor could it be without affording direct encouragement to that which is essentially subversive of God's moral government; and had the Almighty required infliction to fall on offenders themselves, it could not have given such a demonstration of the divine purity, and his love of holiness, as when he sent forth his undefiled Son, whose meat was to do his Father's will, to be for us a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; so complete a manifestation was this of the divine righteousness, that the title of "*holiness to the Lord*," inscribed on the mitre of the high priest, might be said to have been inscribed on all the thoughts, obedience, and *sacrifice of our great High Priest, who was made higher than the heavens*.§ "I delight," said he, by his prophet, "to do thy will, O God." "I was *not rebellious*, neither turned away, but I gave my back to the smiters. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Vain, then, must it appear from all that has been said, to evade the question respecting Christ's holiness of nature by substituting the word *peccable* in place of sinful, since it appears from the inseparable union between manhood and Godhead, it was alike impossible that he could either sin or be *liable* to sin; and had it been otherwise, we would have heard something of his mourning, like his devoted followers, over indwelling sin and corruption. To substitute *peccability*, is a mere evasion, for this word, by our best lexicographers, and especially by Dr. Johnson, is defined to mean a *state of being subject to sin;* and to apply this to our holy, harmless, undefiled Emmanuel, is sufficient to make the blood run cold in every one in whom even the faintest spark of piety exists; for the Father gave not the Holy Spirit by measure unto him, that his obedience might be meritorious, and his death acceptable. "O righteous Father," said he, "the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee."

We cannot conclude these observations, which are designed to establish from Scripture, as well as from some ancient authori-

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* צדקות

† Jer. xliv. 4. "Peccatum est נפשו תועבת, Abominatio animæ ipsius, Prov. vi. 16. Animæ, id est, ipsi essentiæ, et essentiali sanctitati ipsius."—(Œconom. lib. i. c. 5. § 28.

‡ "Quod enim Deus non potest respectu *unius* Attributi Divini, respectu *nullius* potest: sed quod per aliquam proprietatem essentialem fieri non potest, id per omnem fieri nequit."—Diatribe de Just. Div. p 206.

§ הסיר. "Quid non laminæ, sed Menti inscriptum habeat קדש ליהוה sanctitas Domino, Exod xxxix. 30."—Grotius in loc.

—"Higher than the heavens." *Blackwall* notices this expression as so sublime, that he deems it superior to Homer's description of Jupiter upon Mount Ida.—Sacred Classics, vol. i. p. 241, 242.

ties, the doctrine of the complete holiness of our Lord's humanity, without adverting briefly to the question of our Lord's temptations—possessing, as he did, a nature both human and divine. He was tempted, in all points, like as we are, with one exception, which ought never to be lost sight of, and that was, "WITHOUT SIN." But then, with such an exception, how could Christ be said to be tempted? It is easy to understand how a fallen human being is so peculiarly apt to become a prey to temptation, because, with the external allurement, there is an internal predisposition and inclination to render the external circumstance a temptation, or to render the sinner susceptible of impressions from it. But in the spotless Anointed, there was no indwelling corruption to give a favourable reception to any outward allurement; and this being the case, though this pure Being might be vexed and assaulted, he could say, what no other could since the world's revolt, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing *in me*." Though we never read of Christ being personally sick or diseased, Scripture declares that Christ "*took upon him our infirmities*," the *natural*, but none of the *sinful* infirmities of humanity; and to adopt the words of one of the puritans, "the Sun of Righteousness was like the beams of the sun, which shine all over a sinful world, without being tainted with its pollution, for he was separate from sinners." Had he not taken on him the sinless infirmities of humanity, perhaps he could not possibly be said to have been tempted. That he could be enticed by any sinful object was not possible, because there was no unhallowed fire in him, either in his flesh or his human soul, in consequence of the inseparable union between his manhood and Godhead. But as an Apostle says, "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Here, though it is denied that he had sin, it is admitted he took on him the infirmities of our nature—hunger, thirst, weariness. In all points, then, he was tempted, that is, exposed to agonies and sufferings like as we are, for πειρασθῆναι, in the Epistles, signifies exposure to such afflictions as subject men to great temptations, and severely try their obedience; and Christ having thus "suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." No outward allurement, then, could excite any sinful thought or desire; no injurious treatment produce a revengeful or malicious feeling; no pleasure could allure, no pain intimidate him who knew no sin, that "we might receive the righteousness of God in him." Yet, though every attempt to produce in him unholy suggestions was altogether impossible, still possessing as he did the infirmities of our nature, his holy human soul must have been agonized and tortured to an extent of which we can have no conception, and just in the degree that his innocent mind abhorred, and could not be contaminated by any temptations, "being *anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power*." In our own case, we are too apt to consider ourselves, when under temptations from the wicked one, as altogether *passive*, and in this way men ascribe the sins they commit entirely to the power of temptation. A sacred writer, however, has convincingly shown us, that so far as we are said to be tempted effectually, we are *active*, and give consent to the temptation, "drawn away of our own lust and enticed." James i. 14. The adversary, though he tries, has no advantage but what we willingly give him. Now, a temptation may be so called, not only as it may refer to the person tempted, but as having a reference to him that presents to us the temptation. Only conceive an individual to possess a natural and inflexible repugnance to any particular sinful action to which he is vehemently urged by another—here it may be said of the individual who presents the inducement, that he tempted the man to do that against which his whole nature revolted with feelings of the utmost indignation and abhorrence. In this case, the man has felt no desire or wish to comply with the temptation, but the very contrary; still it may be said that he has been severely tempted by a trial of temper, patience, and forbearance, to their utmost limits, by which his feelings have been tortured and lacerated; and this trial will of course be great, according to the strength of natural aversion and disgust which the individual who has undergone a temptation of such a kind feels against the action to which he was so urgently solicited. This principle must apply to our Lord in a higher degree, even to an inconceivable extent, according to the complete perfection of his being; for though he was tried, and he felt the trials by sufferings the most keen and exquisite, yet sin never stained a thought, a word, or an action of his blameless life; for divinity could never have dwelt for a moment in sinful and rebellious flesh any more than the iron and clay could have united in Nebuchadnezzar's image, or light with darkness; for what communion is there between these opposite and irreconcilable things, or

between Christ and Belial? It was only from his possessing in his frame the infirmities of our nature, that the holy Anointed of God could be said to be tempted. In illustration of our meaning, we refer to our Lord's temptation in the wilderness:—"When he had fasted forty days, he was afterwards an *hungered*, and the tempter taking advantage of this, came to him and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made *bread*." Subject as he was, like us, to hunger and other infirmities, it was through these he could be said to be assailed and tempted, because as a human creature it was natural in him to feel pain and oppression, and instinctively to desire to avoid them; and had this not been the case, he would not have been truly constituted *man*, as he would have possessed none of his emotions and susceptibilities. In this respect alone, and in no other, was he tempted like as we are, for his temptation was without sin. And though he had a severe trial and feeling of what it is to be hungry, and weary, and thirsty, and destitute of a place in which to lay his head; to be despised, mocked, persecuted and forsaken, yet all the agonizing feelings arising from such temptations were never paramount to that abiding desire which existed in him to do his Father's will, "for, on account of the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising its shame, that he might bring in an everlasting righteousness." It would seem that it is from this natural abhorrence which humanity has to pain and anguish, and the desire, if possible, to escape from them, that we are to account for the reprehension which our Lord gave to an Apostle, who had thrown a temptation or an offence in his way, by suggesting that his sufferings and decease for man might be spared. To Peter he replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an *offence* unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Possessing all the finer feelings with the sinless infirmities of humanity, he was, as far as the perfection of his nature could admit, in all points tried like as we are; and as sin originally formed no part of our nature, it was not necessary that the "*holy and just One*" should be clothed with sinful and rebellious flesh. Whence, indeed, could he possess sinful flesh?—not by conception, being made of a woman, by the power and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit—not by *imputation*, not being a natural descendant by ordinary generation of the first Adam, or represented by him—not by his words or actions, for he could ask his enemies, "Which of you can accuse me of sin?" How, then, shall we adequately admire the wisdom and goodness of our God, in selecting a perfect Sacrifice for our expiation, and a perfect Pattern for our example! And surely it is overwhelming for us to think, that since there is such an alliance between sinful allurements and a sinful nature, that had Christ as man possessed sinful rebellious flesh, the eternal well-being of unnumbered millions of beings, rational and immortal, would have been finally ruined by one single violation in thought, word, or deed; and so our fall in the second Adam would have been at least as certain as the first, and been more disastrous as being altogether irrecoverable. Let us never think unworthily, then, of our Redeemer's person and work; but let us delight to contemplate him as the most lovely and venerable being whose steps ever trod our world, and whose transcendent excellencies are without a parallel in the universe. The wide creation, among the myriads with which it is peopled, cannot produce an equal, or one second to him, for a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom, who came on the high errand of our redemption, and to teach and enable us to purify ourselves even as "*he is pure*." The holiness of our Redeemer was attested by his judge—by the traitor that sold him—by the malefactor that was crucified with him—by the centurion that guarded him; and it will be assented to by all who are his disciples, for he will wash their robes, and make them *white* in the blood of the Lamb, while they rejoice in him as the Lord the *righteous Judge*, who shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES GIBSON, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. W. MACKENZIE, Comrie.

THE "TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS," THE ONLY INSTRUMENT OF MORAL RENOVATION;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JAMES GIBSON,
Assistant Minister of the College Church, Glasgow.

"*As the truth is in Jesus.*"—EPH. iv. 21.

AMID all the bounties of God's providence, and all the glories, and splendour, and beauty that cover our earth, the world has ever been a scene of much disorder, crime, and misery. It exhibits, amidst all its external grandeur and loveliness, the manifest traces of the primeval curse. Many are the schemes which men, actuated by various principles and motives, have formed to redeem the world from its degradation; and yet degradation and misery have returned and settled down upon it; and notwithstanding the philosophy, eloquence, and arts of the most polished pagan nations, the short description implied in the words of the Apostle in the context is applicable to them all. Verse 17. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." This is a short abridgment of the moral history of every pagan nation, of all who have been destitute of the truth as it is in Jesus. Over all their efforts and speculations is written, "the world by wisdom knew not God."

The light of God's revealed truth has made a wonderful transformation on the face of the moral world, and shown that the foolishness of God, as presumptuous mortals have accounted the Gospel, is wiser than men. But yet though all experience has demonstrated the utter inadequacy of human knowledge to reform mankind, and system after system, and speculation after speculation, have amused and exercised the fancy and the intellect of their contrivers and admirers, and have only added another and another stone to the monument of human pride and weakness; yet even down to the present moment we see this world's sages and great men looking to every thing but the truth as it is in Jesus, for the renovation and happiness of wretched man. And instead of giving the just tribute to the triumphs of the Gospel, where good has been actually achieved, they steal her laurels from her brow, and place them upon the idols of their own adoration. In plain words, they ascribe the triumphs of the Gospel to the labours of man. Even at this day it is melancholy to see, amid the splendid assemblages of rank and talent that grace our day and adorn our age, amid the homage that is paid to science and philosophy in their various departments, the little homage that is paid to the truth of God. It is melancholy to see, amid the

schemes for the advancement of our race, and the mutual gratulations and praises of the great and the learned, and the boasts of human civilization and improvement, that not even a solitary expression escapes in praise of the truth as it is in Jesus, and that scarcely a single champion of the cross is ready in such assemblies to salute and congratulate another. We would not be so ridiculous as to detract from the honours of learning and science. We know no human being more honourable or more worthy of the sincerest tribute of human admiration, than the man of lofty intellect and fine imagination, lending them to the cause of God, from whom they are derived, and to advance the glory of the Redeemer, for whose cause they are given. But when God and the Redeemer are not owned and served, they seem to us as splendid mansions without an owner, or occupied by every unclean creature—as a splendid temple where no God is worshipped, or occupied by impure idols.

There have been times in the history of the human race, when the light of knowledge was dreaded as an invention of the devil, and ignorance was considered as the mother of devotion, and priestly tyranny was employed to quench the light of science, and to bind the human mind in the chains of intellectual darkness. There are regions of the earth, even of civilized Europe, where these times are not yet utterly gone. But, blessed be God! in our land they are passed away; and even the Church of Rome, that punished Galileo for his astronomical discoveries, and whose priests pronounced Greek at the Reformation a heretical language, invented by the evil one, because the knowledge of it revealed the long hidden glories of the Gospel, must now affect, in our land at least, to be the patroness of knowledge and the friend of free opinion.

But with the great majority of those who rule the destinies of nations and sway the opinions of men, all schemes for the welfare of men are patronised, but that which God himself has appointed, and experience has declared alone adequate to the task, "The truth as it is in Jesus." It may be asked how we presume to decide so authoritatively on men of gigantic minds and splendid attainments? Our answer is, "We have a sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place." With the lamp of divine truth in our hands, we can see farther into the abysses and recesses of the moral character of man and the lofty movements of the divine government, than the greatest sages in the darkness of unassisted human nature, with all the instruments and aids of this world's invention; and we pronounce, therefore, without any hesitation, that, without the truth as it is in Jesus, all their boasted labours, and schemes, and inventions for the moral renovation of men, for banishing crime and disorder, licentiousness, cruelty and oppression, will prove in the issue as the house built upon the sand, which, "when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, will fall, and great shall be the fall of them." The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it in his word. In all the lofty predictions which it holds forth of the world's deliverance and emancipation from error, delusion, and misery, and crime, the schemes of human invention are never recognised; and it is emphatically pronounced that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. The days of universal glory and of peace, of purity and freedom, shall arise on the universal prevalence of the word of the living God—of the truth as it is in Jesus: when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. "Let not then the wise man glory in his wisdom; let not the rich man glory in his riches; let not the mighty man glory in his might; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am the Lord that exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord."

In our text and context the Apostle ascribes the superior moral condition of the believing Ephesians above that of the vicious Gentiles, to the manner in which they had learned Christ, and to their being taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, verses 17—19, 20. "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And then follows, in the succeeding parts of the Epistle, a course of practical instructions arising out of the true, calm, honest, diligent, pure, pious, considerate, peaceful, kind, merciful, for-

bearing, forgiving and heavenly spirit of the Gospel, all exhibited in the character and example of Christ, and formed by his Holy Spirit in all those who receive him as their Saviour, their Lord and Master; and which no other principles have ever been able to form in the heart of man.

In the remaining part of the discourse we shall endeavour to answer in part the question, Why or how is the truth as it is in Jesus fitted to produce the results we exclusively ascribe to it? And,

I. We remark, that it is suited to the character of God.

Perhaps, before illustrating this remark, it may be useful to state very shortly what is the truth as it is in Jesus. We observe, that it is altogether of a moral and spiritual nature; and though by its effects on the character of man, on his heart and conduct, it has a most wonderful influence on his external condition, in leading to order, industry, prosperity, and comfort, yet it does not extend to physical knowledge, or the knowledge of external nature, and its adaptation to the circumstances of man. Its effects may be said to be independent of external circumstances; it is fitted for men in every supposable condition, and it requires only to be received to bless them with its benefits, under whatever clime, on whatever soil, or in whatever rank they may be placed.

The leading peculiarities of the truth as it is in Jesus may be compromised under the views which it gives of the character of God as a just God, and yet a Saviour, and of man as a sinner and an heir of wrath, and yet the object of divine mercy. Christ is called the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" and that, we conceive, not merely in reference to his equality with the Father in his original divinity, but in the wonderful manner in which, in his person, and offices, and work, the moral attributes of God are exhibited.

The "truth as it is in Jesus," exhibits the supreme Being as a God of absolute holiness and unchangeable justice, governing the world by a law which is the expression of his own character, and requiring, therefore, perfect and absolute obedience, on pain of God's everlasting displeasure. Yet in entire consistency with this character, and the maintenance of this holy and unchangeable law, exhibiting himself as a God of eternal love and grace, and infinite mercy, as a just God, and yet a Saviour of sinful and miserable mortals, who have broken his law, and rendered themselves liable to eternal condemnation. This he is able to do through the wonderful scheme of redemption, devised in his infinite wisdom, brought about by his almighty power, in the person and work of his own Son: who is constituted the Head and Author of this great work, who took upon him human nature in union with the divine, became man, became incarnate, was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, obeyed the law of God in his life, satisfied all its claims in his death, in his infinitely meritorious sacrifice, thus making atonement for the sins of men, maintaining the divine character, government and law, and yet saving lost sinners: by his resurrection from the dead, proving the acceptance of his sacrifice, confirming the doctrine of a future world, the declarations of a judgment to come: by his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God, exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, and dispensing his Holy Spirit, whom he promised to send when he had ascended to his Father, as the sanctifier and comforter of mankind; thus saving them, securing their pardon, their happiness, and their sanctification and obedience together. By the declaration of mercy, the proof of holiness and justice, the certainty of a judgment to reward or to punish, and the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell, to encourage and deter, promoting all that is holy, and merciful, and joyous. Such is an outline of the truth as it is in Jesus; no less suited to the character of God, than adapted to the condition of man.

1st. It is suited to the character of God.

God is the origin of all things. He is likewise their supreme end. As he created, so he continually upholds and governs all things for his own glory. On his favour absolutely depend the welfare and happiness of his whole creation. Any schemes inconsistent with his will, or undertaken in disregard of his blessing and authority, and without any view to his glory, cannot be expected ultimately to prosper. They can neither originate in, nor be guided by sound piety, by true wisdom, or pure morality. They necessarily carry in them the seeds of error and sin; and if God gave them ultimate success in the happiness of the creature, it would be prospering that which despised and dishonoured himself; it would be giving to the selfish and proud creature the glory due to the Creator. Hence all the schemes that have been formed, independently of the truth of God, have not

only proved vain, but pernicious, God confounding the devices of men, that no flesh should glory in his presence; "hath not God," then asks the Apostle, "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise? and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." God, we may believe, will honour the meanest instrument that does *him* honour, rather than that which slights or despises him. "Him that honoureth me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Hence God honours the Gospel, because it honours himself; and though foolishness to them that perish, it is the power and the wisdom of God to them that believe.

It is altogether worthy of God. Above, infinitely above all human systems, does the revealed will of God, the truth as it is in Jesus, honour the Most High. In it God is all and in all. On the pages of the Bible, God is a God of glorious majesty, supreme power, that cannot be resisted or controlled, of unsearchable wisdom, that cannot err; boundless knowledge from which nothing can be concealed; spotless holiness with which iniquity cannot dwell; inflexible justice which cannot clear the guilty; unchangeable truth and faithfulness that cannot lie or deceive; of boundless goodness and beneficence to supply the wants of every creature; and infinite mercy to forgive and save the erring and the lost. Such is the glorious character exhibited in beautiful harmony, as we have seen in "the truth as it is in Jesus." Suitable to this character is the representation given in the system of his government of the world, in the punishments he awards, and the mercies he bestows; in the happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked; in the dispensation of mercy to lost sinners; in the plan of redemption, the atonement of Christ, and the dispensation of the Holy Spirit to apply the blessings of Christ's redemption to the souls of men, and to fit them for the holy service and presence of God. All this is holy, excellent, and divine, and worthy of the character of God; and we can, therefore, see how "the truth as it is in Jesus," should be made above all human contrivances the only method of redeeming, purifying, and exalting a fallen, lost, and rebellious race.

2. We remark, that the results ascribed to "the truth as it is Jesus," are to be expected from it above all other contrivances for man's moral renovation, when we consider its adaptation to the nature of man as a sinful and accountable creature.

Suppose we saw a wretched creature, an outcast from the comforts and society of human beings, oppressed with poverty, labouring under disease, having little or no use of his bodily faculties, and even his mental powers weakened and shattered through the influence of his maladies, would it not be grievously foolish to expect to remedy his condition by describing the blessings of splendid apparel, fine mansions, and all the luxuries and elegancies of civilization—saying, be ye warmed, and be ye clothed, while ye give him not that which is needful in his condition? If you did this with an air of earnestness and sentimental benevolence, would it not excite pity for your mistake or contempt for your heartlessness? Would it not argue either supreme ignorance of the condition of the wretched creature with whose miseries you were trifling, or actually covering with insult? Something analogous to this, we conceive, are the various plans for the melioration of the condition of man, which do not contemplate him as he is, a fallen, helpless, and lost creature, the victim of sin and death, and incapable of relieving himself; and hence they have all proved as useless as inapplicable. Hence the thousand and ever-changing specifics for curing the miseries of man have proved utterly ineffectual. Hence one man thinks he can cure the woes of humanity by some new scheme of human government; another, by some new plan of social organization; a third, by some happy discovery in philosophy or mechanics; another by the universal diffusion of human knowledge, or the exhibition of some benevolent scheme of morals; but all the while they forget that wretched man is the victim of a dreadful moral disease, which deranges and destroys, or misdirects all his powers, and which by mere human remedies is altogether incurable. In short, like an unskilful physician, they have never known the patient's disease; and they either heal the hurt slightly, or aggravate its virulence, and hasten his destruction. And hence it is, that the many plausible and apparently benevolent, but visionary plans for the wel-

fare of men, have ended in worse than folly and delusion—too often in misery and crime.

The Gospel exhibits man as he is, as conscience, observation, and experience declare him to be, by nature, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. The description therein given of the moral world is, that it is "dead in trespasses and sins; that there is none that doeth good, no, not one; that there is none that seeketh after God. Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known; they have no fear of God before their eyes; they are hateful, and hating one another, enemies of God, and children of wrath." A picture, gloomy though it be, infinitely more consistent with the actual condition of man in every age and country, and in all circumstances, than those pictures drawn by the hand of philosophers and speculators. The former may be severe, but it is like the probing of the faithful and skilful physician who has a remedy at hand; and is infinitely more merciful and wise than to flatter you that you are in health while a deadly disease is upon you, or to mock you with inapplicable remedies. While the disease is plainly described, an all-sufficient remedy is presented in the truth as it is in Jesus. There we see man exhibited as a condemned criminal, but God held forth as a forgiving sovereign; there we see him exhibited as the prisoner of divine justice, but Christ as the deliverer and ransom; there we see him owing the debt of everlasting punishment, but Christ bearing his punishment and satisfying the claims which divine justice has upon him; there we see man the victim of spiritual disease, but Christ exhibited as the Balm in Gilead—the great Physician there; there we see man as held in the bonds of spiritual and moral death, but the Spirit of Christ quickening him into life, breathing upon the dry bones, and causing them to stand up with all the attributes of a living moral man; there we see man destitute of all things, but by union with Christ enriched with all necessary temporal, and with all spiritual blessings; there we see man the creature of misery, but in Christ is exhibited consolation in every distress, a balm for every wound; there we see him the victim of temporal and eternal death, but in Christ a conqueror over death and the grave, and an heir of eternal life and glory. In short, "in the truth as it is in Jesus," there is provision made for the enlightenment of his understanding, the forgiveness of his sins, the purification of his heart and conduct, his comfort on earth, and his everlasting blessedness in heaven. As a boon to depraved and ruined man, it as far excels the schemes of men as light excelleth darkness.

To all of you, my brethren, who have studied the Word of God, who have taken it for the man of your counsel, who have sought to learn in it your own character and the way of salvation, who have gone to the Saviour, and experimentally known the truth as it is in Jesus, we appeal if these things are not so; if you have not the witness in yourselves of the excellency of the truth as it is in Jesus; if you have not experienced its enlightening, purifying, and consoling tendency; and if ye do not find it a light to your feet, and a lamp unto your path, the quickener and supporter of your souls, the pearl of great price, your light in darkness, and your joy in distress, throwing a flood of light on your own character and condition, and revealing to your joy and satisfaction what would otherwise be mysterious, perplexing, and inscrutable in the ways of God. You who are still ignorant of "the truth as it is in Jesus," let me entreat to search if these things be so. A subject which claims to be so important, and that on divine authority, and which so many of the excellent of the earth have received and honoured, and which has confessedly produced so great effects on the character and circumstances of mankind on earth, and professes to reach in its effects into eternity, is surely worthy of your consideration. If you are learned and refined, we profess that you can find in this truth all that can occupy the highest conception and gratify the purest taste. If you are rich and great, we profess that you will find in it that which can make your riches a blessing, and your greatness an honour. If you are poor, we profess that you will here find durable, even eternal riches, treasure in the heavens. Consolation in poverty and distress—a never-failing and Almighty Friend; that you will find yourselves placed in the sight of God, and as rational moral creatures on a level with the most exalted of the earth, for there is no respect of persons with God. If you are rebellious sinners, we profess that you can find pardon and acceptance, and deliverance from sin. Surely, then, it is worth inquiring after "the truth as it is in Jesus." The Gospel is the especial friend of the poor and the miserable. It is its glorious and exclusive distinction that it was preached to the poor.

Christ came to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to save the lost, to care for those whom the world disregarded. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." How melancholy, then, is it to see through the influence of wicked hearts, and the perversions of a cruel, and heartless, and demoralizing infidelity, such vast multitudes of the poor despising the Gospel, rejecting their own best mercy, accounting those their enemies who tell them the truth, and looking for happiness and deliverance to the cruel and ungodly men who are riveting their chains, and robbing them of their highest consolation. "These things ought not so to be."

Lastly, let me exhort all to value, to hold fast, and to promote the "truth as it is in Jesus."

There is nothing more lovely than truth. All ages have professed to admire it, and all men have acknowledged its excellence. But while it receives universal homage and admiration, there is, perhaps, no universally acknowledged good less known, and beloved, and revereneed in practice and reality; and error, and falsehood, evasion, dissimulation, and deceit, most widely prevail among men. The Scriptures set an immense value upon truth. They combine it with mercy; they exhort to buy the truth, and sell it not. God is the God of truth. Christ is the Truth. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. All moral truth centres in and flows from him to guilty men. We are saved through the belief of the truth, set free by it, sanctified by it. The Church is called the pillar and ground of truth. In short, the truth as it is in Jesus, is the instrument of all divine blessings. We ought, therefore, to value it, and hold it fast. For, let us remember, that precious as it is, the "truth as it is in Jesus" is not agreeable to the natural heart; it receiveth it not. Man is a proud as well as a depraved creature. He likes to be of importance himself. He loves sin; and he, therefore, likes not that truth which makes him nothing, and condemns his sins—which strips him of all glory and boasting, and restrains him in all sinful liberty. Hence the reluctance of men to make the truth the object of their regard, and to look to it as the only renovator of men. Men love not the truth, because they have pleasure in unrighteousness. Men may pretend many reasons for their hatred of the truth as it is in Jesus. But as has been strongly but truly said, in accounting for men's dislike of the Word of God, "it is the tremendous power of its light. It is not the spots upon the sun's disk, but it is the rising lustre of that glorious luminary as he pours his beams upon their deeds of darkness and of crime, that makes the robber and assassin skulk off with terror to his den."

As the truth is so valuable, let us labour to hold it fast. Let us pray that God's Spirit may implant and cherish it in our hearts. If it alone can cure the miseries of our race, let us labour to promote it. It is often said, "Great is the truth, and will prevail." This is true in the promise and appointment of God. But no maxim, we believe, has ever been more abused. Too many think, and speak, and act, as if it would prevail whether men hear it, or whether they forbear; whether they aid, or whether they oppose it. This is a manifest delusion. It will prevail only when God disposes the hearts of men to receive it, to give it their aid and their support. Oftentimes have the opposition and persecution of men exterminated both it and its professors. If it prevail, it will be to the confusion of its enemies. Let us beware that we do nothing "against the truth," but every thing "for the truth."

THE DUTY OF TAKING HOLD OF GOD;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. W. MACKENZIE,
Minister of Comrie.

"*There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.*"—ISAIAH lxiv. 7.

THE Prophet gave utterance to the prayer in our context at a time, and in reference to a period when iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold, and judgments were increasing. The whole world lay asleep in the wicked one, and the testi-

mony of the church was almost silenced. Thick darkness covered the earth, and the lamp of God was going out in the temple. The nations were all enemies to God, and the Jews were forgetting and forsaking him. God was then, as now, hiding his face from his church, and consuming them, because of their iniquities. And the most gloomy sign of all was, that none perceived all this, and no one stirred up himself to take hold of God. Although poor, and wretched, and miserable and blind, and naked, they were saying, "We are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." Although destruction was coming upon them, they were crying, Peace, peace. And except Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, and a few other godly men, had been in the church; "except the Lord of Hosts had left unto them a very small remnant, they would have been as Sodom, and should have been like unto Gomorrah;" have been dead in sins, and ripe for destruction.

Knowing that "vain was the help of man," the Prophet set his face to seek the Lord, and take hold of him by prayer and intercession. Verse 1. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down!" He knew that God attended to his own people: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth (in thee) and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways;" and that the "prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" and this induced him to "stir up himself to take hold of God," and to draw down his gracious presence to his church. But his spirit was grieved and distressed at the state of the professed people of God in that generation: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee."

There was then little public acknowledgment of God; but this evil was aggravated and rendered more hopeless to the mind of the Prophet by the want of any eminent instances of individual zeal and devotedness. The complaint in our text is not, that no congregation, no city, no nation, stirreth up themselves to seek God, but that none "stirreth up himself to take hold of thee."

There being too much reason to utter the same complaint in our own times and of our own church, let us consider, with earnest desires for the concurring agency of God's spirit, what is implied in "taking hold of God."

Far more is implied in this duty than, in this day of small things amongst us, speaker can explain or hearers understand; but we may point out three of the most obvious exercises of soul implied in it.

I. It implies to take hold of God in the exercise of saving faith. Expressions almost the same occur in this sense in two other parts of Isaiah. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." Is. xxvii. 5. "The sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and take hold of my covenant." Is. lvi. 6. To take hold of God, to take hold of his strength, to take hold of his covenant, to join ourselves to him, all imply the one act of a sinner taking hold of Christ, or of God in Christ in the exercise of saving faith. This is done at the day of effectual calling, and conversion, and quickening from spiritual death, when the strait gate is entered, when the withered hand of faith is first stretched forth to take hold of the Mediator of the covenant of grace with all his fulness and in all his offices. The soul having been then apprehended by the Holy Spirit, is morally enabled to apprehend or take hold of Christ, and in him of the Father with all his love and grace.

But this first and essential exercise of saving faith is not what is principally referred to in our text. The Prophet does not complain that there were then no converted persons. Undoubtedly there were some. Seven thousand were in the days of Elijah in Israel. But he complains, that of those who had taken hold of God's covenant for salvation to their own souls, no one was stirring up himself to take hold of God; and he regards this as the worst and most fearful sign that God had hidden his face from the church, and was consuming them because of their iniquities. There is, then, a

II. Second and a farther exercise implied in taking hold of God, one which true believers alone can engage in, and one in which they may be very deficient. This exercise is alluded to by the apostle Paul, in Phil. iii. 12, where he says of himself, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." The Greek

word translated *apprehend*, corresponds with the Hebrew word in our text translated *take hold of*. Paul had long ago taken hold of Christ by saving faith, when Christ had taken hold of him by his converting Spirit; but far from resting satisfied with this, he was following after; he was stirring up himself to take hold of that for which he was taken hold of by Christ Jesus. Paul sought not only to win Christ, but also to be conformed to him; not only to be justified, but also to be sanctified. And, therefore, we infer, that the second exercise implied in taking hold of God, is to apprehend his moral image. This is done in the process and work of sanctification. It was for this end that the elect were predestinated, "that they might be conformed to the image of his Son;" for this end were they chosen, given to the Son, redeemed by his precious blood, quickened from spiritual death, effectually called, engrafted into the true vine, planted in the Lord's vineyard, made partakers of the Holy Spirit, justified and adopted. All these privileges have been conferred upon them, in order that they may bring forth the fruits of holiness, and bear the holy beauteous and spiritual likeness of God. The believer advances in the divine image, by contemplating the character of God as revealed in his word and works, and especially in the person, work, and cross of Christ, by mortifying indwelling sin, by strengthening the principles of the spiritual life, by denying the world, the flesh, and the devil, and by cleaving with full purpose of heart to the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices and fulness.

Those who are engaged in this exercise are blessings to the world and to the church, and are objects of complacency to God.

Scarce any thing beneath the sun is more beneficial to the world than humble, diligent, growing, active, and eminent believers. It is they that prevent the world from completely resembling hell: remove God's people from the earth, and what will be left save the devil's servants. Spiritual and holy persons are the salt of the earth, preserving it from corruption. They are the lights of the world, and the witnesses for God; and the more salt of the grace and light of truth they possess, the more benefit will the world receive from them.

To the church, also, judicious and advanced believers are the greatest blessings. These, to use the Prophet's similitude, are as the he-goats before the flocks, guiding them in the way, showing them the green pastures, shunning dangers, withstanding enemies and deceivers, helping the weak, opposing the unruly, encouraging the timid, and arousing the slothful. Even a true church destitute of these is like a school without teachers, a nation without rulers, an army without leaders.

And unto God himself there seems to be nothing in this lower creation more pleasing than those individuals who have reached a high degree of sanctification, and attained much of his own moral likeness. He loves his own image in his Son with an eternal, infinite and unchangeable love. He cannot but love it, according to its measure in his saints; for he loveth righteousness. They are fair, beauteous, lovely in his eyes, and he delighteth in contemplating them. "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a broken and contrite spirit." The Lord taketh pleasure in his saints. "My dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. Thou art beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, fair as the moon, clear as the sun." He in a manner takes delight in displaying his saints to the admiration of his angels: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" These holy, spiritual, humble persons are God's friends on earth; "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Mal. iii. 17. For the sake of these, his friends, God spares wicked nations among whom they dwell, even as he would have spared Sodom had there been ten righteous persons found therein, and as he spared Jerusalem and Judah long for the sake of David his servant. For their sakes he bestows manifold blessings; as on Egypt for the sake of Joseph; on the house of Obed-edom for the sake of the ark; on the widow of Zarephath for the sake of Elijah; and on Babylon for the sake of Daniel. In consistency with these, his usual dealings, he said to Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." Jer. v. 1. How unspeakable a loss, then, to any church or nation, that there is in it no one that is stirring up himself to take hold

of the divine image in progressive and eminent sanctification!

III. The third great exercise implied in taking hold of God is prayer—wrestling, importunate, pleading prayer. It is not every kind even of acceptable prayer that deserves the name of taking hold of God. The Prophet speaks in the verse of our text of a "calling upon his name" as if this were a lower exercise of prayer than taking hold of him. There is a taking of the kingdom of heaven by violence, and a striving to enter into the strait gate. And five ways may be mentioned in which a soul, through pleading prayer, taketh hold of God:

1. By taking hold of or pleading his perfections.

This is of singular efficacy in obtaining his blessing and averting his judgments. A gracious soul thus takes hold of God, as did Jacob when he wrestled with the angel of Jehovah, and as a prince, had power with God and prevailed. It pleads, and, as it were, takes hold of his holiness, and prevails with him, to manifest and glorify his perfection; pleads his grace, and prevails with him to be gracious; takes hold of his faithfulness, and obtains fulfilment of his promises; takes hold of his strength, and prevails with him to do great and powerful works. It is a soul like this, having power as a prince with God, that has influence to draw down the Spirit on a church or land, and to avert spiritual and temporal judgments. To such the Lord says, "Concerning the work of my hands command ye me." Is. xlv. 11. These like Moses do stand in the breach to turn away the wrath of God. "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy." Ps. cvi. 23. And, therefore, for want of such men, Isaiah in our text makes the same complaint as the Lord himself, in Ezekiel xxii. 30. "And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them."

God can do nothing contrary to his perfections. All his actings are the immediate result of them. But it pleaseth him that his saints should plead his perfections, and, as it were, take hold of them in holy, humble, fervent importunity. Some of his greatest deeds and manifestations of his perfections upon earth have been performed in answer to the prayers and according to the pleadings of his praying people. Was he ready to spare Sodom? It was in conformity with the pleadings of Abraham, who took hold of his perfections, justice and righteousness. "This be far from thee, Lord, to destroy the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, this be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen. xviii. 25. Why did he spare Israel in the desert, after their idolatry and their rebellion upon the report of the spies? Because, as it is said, Moses would not suffer him to destroy them; he took such hold of his perfections. Exod. xxxii. 9—14. Num. xiv. 11—20. Why did he restore Jerusalem after the seventy years' captivity? In answer to the prayers of Daniel and the angel of the Lord, (Dan. ix. Zech. i. 12,) pleading the righteousness, faithfulness and mercy of God. When did the Comforter first descend upon the Church? When they were assembled for prayer. And wherefore was he sent the second time? In answer to the pleadings of the Apostles, that "God would behold the threatenings of his enemies, and grant signs and wonders, to be done in the name of his holy child Jesus." Those who in this manner have grace to take hold of God, are the pillars of a church, and the strength of a kingdom.

2. The second way of taking hold of God in prayer is, to plead his relations to his Church and people, as Father, Creator, Preserver and Redeemer.

It was this that the son who left his home, wasted his inheritance, and reduced himself to misery, appealed to as his last and only hope. He had no merit, had forfeited all his filial rights, had become unworthy of his Father's love. Yet still he was his Father. "I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The paternal relation which was the last anchor of this sin-wrecked reprobate, affords to the Church in her darkest, saddest, most backsliding and forsaken state, a mean of taking hold of God. After pleading and wrestling with his perfections, Isa. lxiii. 15, with his heavenly Majesty, "Look down from heaven;" with his holiness and glory, "and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory;" with his zeal and omnipotence, "where is thy zeal and thy strength;" with his compassion and

merey, "the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained?" After taking this hold of the perfections of God, the Church waxes more fervent and importunate as the sense of misery and helplessness increaseth, and stirreth up herself to take yet a firmer grasp of the Lord, and to urge him by a yet more tender and prevailing argument. Verse 16. "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." And after mournfully describing her sad condition through sin and misery, and earnestly entreating extraordinary interpositions of grace in her behalf, and lamenting, as in our text, that none are duly impressed with their need of these, she again returns to the same plea. "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou the potter; and we are all the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people." The weakest and sickliest infant in the household of faith can use this argument with prevailing effect. What parent can bear unmoved the cry of his own offspring? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." This argument touches a tender chord in the heart of the children of God. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy Father that hath bought thee? The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him." By no other way can a firmer hold be taken of the heart of the Lord. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have merey upon him, saith the Lord." And it is when the heart of the Lord and the hearts of his people are knit together by the awakening of paternal and filial love, that "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications shall I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father unto Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born."

3. A third way of taking hold of God in prayer is, to plead his promises, declarations and engagements.

A saving hold of the covenant of grace secures personal deliverance from hell. Eminent attainments in sanctification adorn the Gospel, beautify and draw down benefits on the Church, and do exceedingly increase the temporal and eternal blessedness of their possessors. The holy and unsearchable perfections of God may be most glorified in doing what they are pleaded against. And the paternal love of the Father may bring believers, his children, and the church, his family, through times and scenes of deepest affliction, grieving his own heart, wounding them severely, and occasioning cries, and tears, and prayers, and pleadings of bitterest intenseness and agony, as when it was uttered, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But the promises of God afford not only a firm hold upon him for great blessings to the pleader and the church, but they also direct and encourage believers to take hold of special and definite blessings, and not to let the Lord go until he grant them. It was thus that Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed. He had not only a perfection to plead, as Abraham took hold of God's justice in behalf of Sodom; nor had he only the relationship between God and him as Eliezer pleaded in the city of Nahor, but he had also a special and definite promise, which it would be inconsistent with God's veracity and faithfulness not to fulfil to the very letter, a promise recorded in Genesis xxviii. 15. "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." And pleaded in xxxii. 11, 12. "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." It was thus Jacob pleaded, and wrestled, and he prevailed. For Esau, deprived of birthright and blessing, a companion of the ungodly, and captain of 400 men, ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept. What hath not the Lord promised to do for his Church? What wonders, what apparent impossibilities will he not effect for those who by faith ap-

prehend, and by wrestling and prayer plead his promises, and put his faithfulness to the test! There are absolute promises in the Gospel made to sinners as such. Stout-hearted, without money, miserable and self-destroyed, the vilest of the vile may plead these with good hope of being heard. There are promises to children of God, suited to every possible state and frame they may be in. The Father only waits to be put in mind of them. The infinite fulness of Gospel grace is kept ready to be dispensed to every soul that bringeth a promissory note in the hand of faith, raised up in pleading prayer; the poorest believer, in virtue of the infinite sufficiency of his cautioner and surety, has unbounded credit in the treasury of heaven; the promises are the keys that open every door in the Church's storehouse. But except they be pleaded, can we expect them to be performed? "Put me in remembrance, saith the Lord; let us plead together; declare thou that thou mayest be justified." "For all these things" promised, *i. e.* a new heart, the effusion of the Spirit, the complete establishment and glory of the Church, "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." The promises are given by the Father to the Son for the behoof of his Church. They are purchased by the precious blood of Christ; they are confirmed by the oath of God; they shall be fulfilled in every jot and tittle; they shall be abundantly fulfilled in the gracious experience of every believer who is by the Spirit stirred up to trust and to plead them; the faithfulness of God to his promises is the shield and buckler of his saints. And when a day of evil cometh, defenceless is the soul, the congregation, the nation in whose behalf none stirreth up himself to plead the promises, and for whom no shield of faith, or buckler of divine faithfulness is lifted up to slay the enemy and the avenger.

4. A fourth way of taking hold of God in prayer is, to plead his past dealings.

Thou hast done so in times past, and to others; and to us, therefore, do so now. Thou hast begun a good work in my soul; carry it on. Thou hast delivered thy Church and people of old; do it now. Thou hast shamed and confounded thine enemies, when their pride and their might were at the highest; shame and confound them now. Thou hast planted a vine in our land; look down from heaven; revive and quicken this thy vine. We may fail in the right interpretation of an unfulfilled promise, and, therefore, plead it amiss, and expect what shall not be given; but the past dealings of God are easily understood, and afford a pledge that he will do the same in all similar circumstances. The Church doth in this manner take hold of God in Isaiah li. 9. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord: awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" And from what the Lord hath done of old, the Church is assured that he will complete his work, and perfect grace in glory. Verse 11. "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

When Nehemiah stirred up himself to take hold of God, and to bring him to his church and people, he not only pleaded a promise, but also appealed to his past dealings. "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there." And having thus taken hold of a promise, he then pleaded the covenant relation, and the past dealings of God. "Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand." Neh. i. 8—10. And the solemn prayer in the ix. chap. of Nehemiah at the fast and humiliation, is almost wholly occupied in pleading with the Lord from his past dealings and mercies.

There are many ways of taking hold of God, which the saints in Scripture employed with acceptance and success, and which most exercised souls do, perhaps, in some measure understand, but which, alas! in this day of small things in the visible church are little understood, and less employed.

We must hasten to conclude, by adverting to a

5th way of taking hold of God, which is the way that the spirit of conviction brings a sinner to, after driving him from the last

refuge of lies; and which the Church has recourse to when the Lord seemeth to have forgotten to be gracious, and to cover himself with a cloud, that his prayer pass not through:—*acquiescing in the sovereignty, and looking to the unsearchable mercies of God.* When all endeavours fail either to bring the Lord to our will, or to know what his will is; when a view of the unbelief even of our belief, of the guilt of our righteousness, and of our inability to take hold of God, fills the soul with amazement and confusion; when we are at extremity, and our "power quite gone, and none shut up or left," it is then the duty of God's people to "be still, and know that he is God," to acquiesce in his will whatever it be, saying, with David, "It is the Lord, let him do to me," and to all, "what to him seemeth good; let him do what he will with his own." And with Job, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." A soul thus humbled, and thus lying under and taking hold of the feet of God's sovereignty, bereft of every plea and stay, and looking only to free and unsearchable mercy, is in the way of receiving every blessing. "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left."

It was thus that the Syrophenician woman whose faith is commended to all generations, took hold of the Lord. It was this state of soul in her that made Jesus marvel, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Matt. xv. 22. "Truth, Lord; but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Thou wilt bestow all the blessings of the everlasting covenant upon thy chosen children; and it is infinitely right that thou shouldst do so. We have no right to them; but are there not, as it were, some crumbs, some blessings of thy free grace and unsearchable mercy, which thou mayest bestow upon such dogs as we are in thy presence.

From what has been said, it appears how lofty an exercise of soul it is to take hold of God. How marvellous the thought, a worm of the dust to influence the thoughts and operations of the Almighty God! Well might Abraham, when occupied in this work, fall upon his face, and say, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes. Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak." It is a work too mighty for the feeble powers of man. No creature ever did or could accomplish it, except so far as strengthened by the Spirit, except the Lord took him up in his everlasting arms and enabled him to put his hands on himself, and plead with him as a man pleadeth with his friend, or a child with his father.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTONE, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR, Greenock.

THE SAVIOUR'S AGONY IN GETHSEMANE;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTONE,
Minister of the United Secession Church, Eglinton Street, Glasgow.

"*And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*"—LUKE xxii. 44.

EVERY step that we proceed in the history of our blessed Saviour it becomes more interesting. When we read of his being born in a stable and laid in a manger, we feel disposed to pity the poverty of his parents which forced them to be contented with such mean accommodation. When, however, we perceive learned men, directed by heaven, coming from afar, presenting to him the richest offerings and paying him the humblest homage, our conceptions of him are elevated; and we conclude, that this is no common child, and that no common destinies await him. We are confirmed in the opinion, when at twelve years of age he is introduced to our notice reasoning with the wise and the learned, and discovering a vigour of intellect and an extent of information far superior to those who were much farther advanced in life. We would willingly follow him into retirement and contemplate the virtues of his mind as they gradually expanded. The sacred historian, however, has not conducted us into this scene, and we must be satisfied with believing that every thing amiable and excellent in mind and in conduct was beautifully displayed in his character. The next interesting situation in which we behold the Son of God, is when he was baptized of John in Jordan, and when a voice from the most excellent glory testified of his Messiahship and the divinity of his mission. From this period we date the commencement of his public labours. Wherever he is, or however employed, we find him answering the description given of him by an ancient prophet: "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." In the passage now before us, he is introduced to our notice as having arrived at the very acmé of his sufferings. After having eaten the passover, and instituted an ordinance which was to be observed as a memorial of his death in all succeeding generations, attended by a few of his disciples, he retired to the garden of Gethsemane, and, there "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." These words direct our attention, in the first place, to that agony which our Saviour endured; and, in the second place, to the exercise in which he engaged whilst enduring it. In the sequel of this discourse, I shall confine myself to the first of these. Let us then attend to that agony which our Lord is here represented as enduring. And, concerning it, I remark,

1st. That it was *awfully severe.*

In the sufferings of our Saviour we are furnished with a display of the noblest magnanimity that ever adorned the page of history. The patience with which he submitted to want, the meekness with which he bore insult, and the calm dignity with which he endured corporeal pain, shed a lustre around his character, and proclaim him to be decidedly superior to the bravest of mortals. When hungry and thirsty, when

insulted by the populace, when crowned with thorns, when bleeding under the scourge, when bearing his cross—the fortitude which he displayed was such as would have induced us to believe that no circumstance whatever could have bent the energy of his soul, or wrung from him the language of complaint. When, therefore, we view his conduct in the garden, we can account for it only by the excruciating anguish which he was doomed to feel.

The circumstances mentioned by the sacred historian, in reference to this event, while they finely mark the progress of our Saviour's agony, likewise depict in the liveliest colouring its awful severity. He took with him, we are informed, some of his disciples, and they witnessed the dreadful scene. The presence of friends, whose good we consult and whose respect we cultivate, has a powerful tendency to repress those ebullitions which a paroxysm of pain naturally produces. In the company of others we struggle with feelings which would overpower us were we alone; in the company of others we bear torture and pain in silence, which, were there no eye upon us, would be interrupted with groans and with cries. But the presence of his disciples had no influence on their Lord. In their sight he fell prostrate on the ground, and, in the bitter anguish of his grief, he implored the interposition of his God. It must have been no common degree of suffering that caused their Master thus to act in the presence of disciples who had been taught to revere him, and to contemplate his conduct in the hour of suffering as the noblest model on which theirs could be formed.

The agony of our Lord, though severe at its commencement, increased dreadfully in its progress. "He began," says one of the sacred historians, "to be amazed and to be heavy;" he kneeled and prayed; he returned and roused his drowsy disciples; and, after exhorting them to watch, he appears to have been more powerfully agitated. The storm rose in violence, and beat upon him in awful fury. During this second stage of his agony, a messenger from heaven appeared to strengthen him. Trouble is often mitigated by sympathy. This has a powerful tendency to banish a sense of pain from the mind, and this tendency is increased in proportion to the assistance and consolation which those who kindly sympathize with us are capable of conferring. Had even the disciples stepped forward and endeavoured to comfort their Lord, it might have tended to assuage the bitterness of his anguish; but a more powerful agent is employed for the purpose: one of those pure intelligences who minister before the throne of God is sent to impart comfort and strength to the agonized Jesus. And, doubtless, his appearance was not in vain. But even the presence of an angel could not avert the descending storm; and whatever comfort he might communicate to the sufferer, yet the agony still increased in violence and severity; for, even after the appearance of the angel, his "sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground."

Anguish of mind is always more severe than the pain which is produced by mere bodily suffering. The most exquisite torture has been endured without a groan. Whilst every limb and joint have been put to the rack, men of magnanimity have borne these throes with patience and in silence, braving the cruelty of their tormentors and nobly triumphing over all the tortures which they could employ; but had these very men been doomed to feel mental anguish in some of its higher degrees, they would have been convulsed—they would have groaned and expired. It was an extraordinary agony of mind which our Saviour now endured, and it produced extraordinary effects: "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." It is impossible to describe the severity of that agony which was attended with such terrible symptoms. In the cool of the evening, in the open air, kneeling on the ground, his body was covered with a bloody perspiration, which oozed from all its pores. His suffering was at its height. The prediction was accomplished: "He was poured out like water: all his bones were out of joint; his heart was like wax; it was melted in the midst of his bowels." The awful grandeur of the scene was not sufficient to keep the disciples awake; but it was viewed with wonder by angels, and the result of it was contemplated by them with anxiety. The pious mind meditates upon it with no common degree of interest; and whilst the Son of God is thus agitated and agonized, it naturally inquires what was the cause of such extraordinary effects?

This leads me to remark,

2dly. That this agony was produced by the wrath of God.

We generally ascribe to some unknown

cause those parts of human conduct which widely differ from the general tenor of life, and which cannot be accounted for on the common principles of action. When we perceive an individual either in prosperity or adversity maintaining a uniform equanimity, and only in one or two instances uncommonly elevated or uncommonly depressed, the conclusion which we immediately form is, that there is some cause in operation either entirely new, or else to such a degree as it never previously affected the mind. When we take a full view of the conduct of our Saviour during his afflicted life, we cannot fail to admire the virtues which he displayed. His firmness of mind, his patience and resignation, his gentleness and mildness under the sufferings he was called to endure, form a lovely moral picture on which angels may delight to gaze. In the life of the Saviour, however, there are two instances which occur where the agitation of his mind rose to such a height, and produced such effects as were totally incompatible with his usual calmness and equanimity. One of these is recorded in the passage now before us: "And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The mind dwells on this scene with intense interest; and whilst we perceive that Jesus, whose mind remained firm in many a former trial, convulsed with suffering, and filled with terror and amazement, we are anxious to investigate the cause of such terrible effects.

When we consult the inspired volume, the only source whence we must derive our information on this interesting subject, we are told of a cause every way adequate to produce this agony which Jesus endured. This is the wrath of God. It was predicted by ancient prophets, that the "Lord was pleased to bruise his Son, and to put him to grief." Proceeding on this fact, an inspired Apostle informs us, that Christ was "made a curse for us." This curse was visible in his birth. It followed him close through every scene of his humiliation; it was dreadfully displayed in that agony which we are now considering. It is here that we are furnished with a practical answer to the inquiries of the Prophet: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?

It is in vain that the enemies of the truth endeavour to account for this agony on any other principle. Do they inform us that it was produced by the agency of infernal spirits? In that hour of darkness we are willing to allow, that the powers of hell combined their forces and assaulted the Son of God with all their strength and in all their fury; but we cannot allow that their rage alone could produce such a violent convulsion of body, such a frightful agony of mind. They had previously tried their strength, but they were foiled by the object of their hate. On the shield of faith he received their fiery darts, and in the keenest of the contest he displayed a calmness and a dignity which stamped his character with infinite superiority. The contest, it may be said, was more severe than at any former period. We willingly grant it; but we would ask, is it possible that he who showed such superiority over these enemies at one time should be made to quail at another under any power which they could bring against him? Is it urged that the prospect of torture and of death, which was immediately before him, appalled his heart, filled him with terror, and agonized his whole frame? O ye pretended admirers of the heroism of him who came, as ye say, to enlighten man, and to set the world an example of fortitude under suffering! why will ye divest him even of this quality, and degrade him beneath men who have been the boast of Grecian and of Roman story; for, in comparison of these on your principles, he is completely eclipsed, and that Jesus whom ye profess to admire shrinks from ills which many have nobly braved?

The circumstances of the case evidently prove that there was some dreadful cause operating in all its force. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was far removed from every visible cause of suffering. He had previously fortified his own mind and the minds of his disciples, by the contemplation of the sublimest truths. He had just been engaged in prayer which has often soothed the sorrows of the troubled soul. Every circumstance would have led us to conclude that his mind would be more than usually calm. The question then recurs, Why was he agonized in such circumstances as these? No terror overwhelmed his soul, no convul-

sive throe agitated his frame, when crowned with thorns, when scourged and buffeted, when bearing the cross on which he was soon to suffer. Why, then, are such effects produced in this scene of retirement? Consistency necessitates us to ascribe these to a sense of the divine wrath wherewith he was filled. When we have proceeded thus far, however, in ascribing the agony of Jesus to the wrath of God, our inquiries do not stop. We do not account for the circumstances in which we find him placed. A question here forcibly occurs to the mind, How comes it that the wrath of God was thus poured out on his only begotten Son?

This leads us forward to the

3d. Remark, concerning the agony of Christ, which is, that the imputed guilt of an elect world was its procuring cause.

When we examine the promises and the predictions concerning the Son of God, there is one prominent idea which invariably presents itself to our minds—that whilst he was doomed to be a sufferer, the guilt for which he suffered was not his own. Upon the supposition of this fact, or rather to give it that prominence which it deserves, the whole of that ancient scenic representation of the Gospel proceeds. And whilst innocent victims bled as the supposed substitutes of sinful man, prophets appointed by God pointed to the coming Messiah, and described him as one who "was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" but as one on whom God had laid the iniquities of us all, who was to be bruised for our iniquities and wounded for our transgressions, who was to be chastised for our peace, and by whose stripes we were to be healed. The same truths were taught by inspired men under the New Testament dispensation. They lead us to view Christ as suffering the just for the unjust, and describe him as our Passover sacrificed for us—they all proceed on the substitution of Christ in our room.

If this truth be allowed it leads us a step forward; for the idea of substitution necessarily implies the imputation of the guilt of the original offender to the person substituted. It has, indeed, been objected to this doctrine, that it is neither proper nor just that one person should be substituted in the room of another. That no man has a right to give his life for another; and that no legislator can possibly accept of the life of one as an expiation for the crimes of another, we most readily admit. We cannot, however, in this instance reason from analogy. The Most High can exercise a right which belongs not to man. The theory of the Scriptures on this subject, when viewed in all its parts, is most beautiful and consistent. We are informed that the Substitute is every way the equal of the divine Legislator; and what, therefore, it is just in God to give, it is just in God to accept.

Every view which we take of this subject confirms the statements which we have now made, and leads us to consider the guilt and the sins of men as the procuring cause of that agony which Jesus endured. Even by those who deny this truth, the innocence of the Redeemer will not be called in question. They will, and they must allow, that he was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. How, then, do they account for his sufferings? They could not possibly be for his own sins. Why, then, does he wander an outcast as it were from his own native heaven? why does reproach lift up her voice against him? why does poverty lay her cold hand upon him? why are the vials of divine wrath poured on his devoted head? We cannot, no, we cannot account for these things on any other principle than by admitting that he stood forth the Substitute of man, bare their sins, and endured the full execution of the sentence against them. On any other principle we do not hesitate to assert, that the agony of Christ presents a phenomenon in the moral world which annihilates the justice of God, and which holds him up as a tyrant whose power is exerted for the destruction of virtue, and to whose ear the groans extracted from suffering innocence is the softest, the sweetest music.

Let us contemplate,

4thly. The grand design of this agony.

We reason concerning the greatness of any design from the preparations which are made, and the means which are employed for its accomplishment. When we look at the predictions which were uttered, and the promises which were given by the Most High; when we perceive a religious dispensation established; when we are called to view every event which occurred for many a revolving age; when we contemplate all as designed to prepare the way for bringing about one object, we form the conclusion, that in interest and importance it must be of no

common magnitude. When we are called to view the Son of God descending from heaven—appearing in human nature—suffering and dying to accomplish this object, its interest and importance increase in our estimation. The conclusion which we form from these circumstances is correct. The agony of Jesus was intended to accomplish a design more grand, difficult, and noble in itself, and more glorious to God in its consequences, than even the formation of the universe. This design was the renovation of the moral world.

The Scriptures of truth represent man as morally depraved, and they account for the fact on the principle of his having violated the law of God, and incurred the curse by which it was sanctioned. In this situation he might have been left to perish, and no reflection whatever could possibly be cast on the divine character. As the righteous judge, God might have executed the sentence; as the merciful Father he determined to pardon and to save: "For God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The obedience of his Son unto the death was the means by which his gracious designs were to be accomplished. In proof of this we have already advanced two very important steps; for if we have shown that the divine wrath was the cause of the agony of Christ, and that this wrath was poured out upon him because of the sins of his people which were laid to his charge, the conclusion is obvious, that the sentence being executed on the surety, the violated law of God has no further claim against the original offender.

But was this agony of Christ, combined with his other sufferings and his death, a sufficient recompense to divine justice for the dishonour which it had suffered by sin? It was. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the threatening of God. This threatening was executed on the Saviour; and, being capable of bearing it, on him all the fury of divine justice was spent. We follow the Son of God from the garden to the cross. We see him bow his head, and hear him exclaim, "It is finished!" The scene is closed; a new one opens to our view; God is reconciled to man; "mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." Every part of the universe re-echoes the glad notes of this song of praise, "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and goodwill towards men."

The subject which we have now been considering furnishes us with much useful instruction.

It exhibits to us the love of God. Love has oft been the theme of the poet's song. The descriptions which they have given of its nature are beautiful, and its effects they have painted in language the most lively and glowing. In the present depraved state of man, love pure and unalloyed, dwells not in his breast. Though this be the case, yet there are examples of its effects on record which cannot fail to impress the mind with an idea of its power and purity. But what is the purest or the most ardent love that ever glowed in human breast when compared with that love which God has displayed for the fallen family of man? He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Every part of the humbled suffering life of Jesus, proclaims the greatness of the love of God. As the colours of the rainbow, however, are reflected the most brightly and lovely from the bosom of the blackest cloud, so the love of God to man beams forth most beautifully amidst the darkest scenery of the humiliation of his Son. It is in Gethsemane and on Calvary that the sentiment of the beloved disciple is emblazoned in characters fair and eternal: "Herein, indeed, is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

The subject which we have been considering, illustrates the grace and condescension of the Saviour. Condescension is that species of benevolence which enhances every other by waving all superior advantages. The man in whose bosom it resides is loved by his friends, and esteemed by all. Condescension is great in proportion to the elevated station which we originally occupied, and the degradation to which we submit. In this light let us look at the condescension of the Son of God. He had a "glory with the Father" before the world began," infinitely more splendid than any creature, however noble his nature, or elevated his rank. Now, in these circumstances, had the Son of God assumed the nature of angels, it would have been amazing condescension; but he took upon himself the nature of man. And here had he appeared in the higher ranks of life surrounded with every thing that could confer elegance, or

minister to ease, enjoyment, and happiness, it might have been some alleviation; but he took upon himself the form of a servant. Contemplate him while in our world, going about doing good, worn with toil, pressed with hunger, parched with thirst, without a home to shelter him, or even a spot whereon to lay his head. Were you going to view a painting, you would choose that position from which its lights and shades, and the whole of its keeping appeared to best advantage. Would you view the condescension of the Saviour in all its interest and loveliness, oh! look at him when he is in an agony in the garden, and when he gives up the ghost on the cross, for it is here that we discover the "grace of him who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich."

In fine, the subject which we have been considering displays the evil nature of sin. The nature of any cause is known by the effects of which it is productive. When we contemplate the effects which sin has produced, we must come to the conclusion, that it is the greatest evil which is to be found in the universe. It was sin which was the cause of angels being expelled from the bliss and the brightness of heaven, and of their being consigned to the blackness of the regions of darkness and despair; it was sin which was the cause of man's banishment from paradise, where "peace and purity commingled charms," and of his being loaded with a curse the most withering; sin brought a deluge of waters on our earth which swept from its surface a whole generation of human beings. In contemplating the ruined happiness of angels and of men, or in casting our eye over the wreck of a deluged world, we remember the fearful nature of their crimes, and we acknowledge the justice of their doom; but the Son of God was "holy, harmless, undefiled, the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person;" and yet when the guilt of man was imputed to him he was made a curse, and it pleased the Lord to bruise and to put him to grief. In the sufferings of the Saviour we have a display of the evil nature of sin, more hideous and fearful far than we could contemplate, were the veil which covers the world to come removed, and were we permitted to perceive the wretchedness of those who quail and writhe under the unmitigated curse of omnipotence. May the Lord, the Spirit impress these truths deeply upon our minds. Amen.

THE DANGER OF COMING TO THE MARRIAGE-FEAST WITHOUT A WEDDING GARMENT;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR,

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"*And he was speechless.*"—MATTHEW xxii. 12.

In the parable before us, the Saviour compares the free offers of the Gospel, and all its invaluable blessings, with a wedding-dinner, in all its royal abundance and rich variety, to which a king had invited his friends. But they refused to come. He overlooked their indifference, and forgave their insulting refusal. "And he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them who are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the rest took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." In his anger, therefore, he slew these wicked and unworthy men, commissioned his servants to go into the highways, and to bid every one whom they should find to the marriage-feast. These servants did as they were commanded; for "they gathered together as many as they could find: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."

In eastern countries it was, and still is the custom to wear long white robes at public festivals. And it was the highest insult that could be offered to the master of the feast to appear in any other. Even in our own country, when the king holds a levee, visitors are presented in full court dresses, prepared for the occasion. And to those

who are not so attired, the favour of presentation would be denied by the lords in waiting. Throughout the kingdoms of the east, from whose manners the Saviour here borrows the figures of his allegory, such insulting disrespect to the master of the entertainment incurred not only resentment, but even the severest punishment. To this we find allusion made in the prophecies of Zephaniah, i. 7. "Hold thy peace," says he, "at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel." This guest, therefore, "held his peace," when interrogated by the king, for he could not plead that he was ignorant of his country's usages. Neither could he urge, that, being called to the feast from the highways, he had no opportunity of borrowing a wedding-garment, or money to purchase one; for it is likewise the custom for kings, and nobles, and great men in the east not only to make the feast, but also to provide wedding-garments for every guest that is invited. He might, therefore, have had one, by applying to the ruler of the feast, which was his imperative duty: and he ought not to have intruded himself among the guests without one. And of all this he seemed perfectly conscious, which made his conduct the less excusable; for, when he was asked why he had not put on the wedding-garment that was prepared for him, as well as for the other guests, "he was speechless."

This beautiful parable represents in the most striking and simple language the offers of the Gospel that were made to the Jews. They were first invited to the feast. But preferring the emoluments of the world, and the ceremonial services of the Mosaic law, to the riches of Messiah's kingdom, and the spiritual worship of the New Testament dispensation, they "made light" of the invitation, and refused to come. They rejected the gospel plan of man's recovery, spurned at the doctrines of grace, killed the servants of God, stoned his prophets, and crucified his Son! The commission is, therefore, extended to the Gentile world, and his ministers are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature. They are commanded to invite all to come to the Saviour, that his wedding may be furnished with guests. The Gentiles are here represented as accepting of the invitation, embracing the offers of mercy, and closing with a crucified Saviour upon his own terms. To this there is, indeed, one exception in the parable. One is represented as accepting of the invitation, but as coming in his own righteousness, instead of accepting of the robe which Christ has prepared. He rejects "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." Instead of putting on the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, and trusting in that for justification, and pardon, and sanctification, he appears at the marriage of the Lamb in the filthy rags of his own self-righteousness. And when questioned by the king why he had rejected the atonement, trusted in the deeds of the law, by which no flesh living can be justified; trampled upon the blood of Christ, and intruded himself among the guests without the wedding-garment, which was prepared; his arrogance could sustain him no longer, he felt self-condemned, and "he was speechless."

God in his providence has often invited you by his servants to come to this feast. This day the invitation is renewed. We bid you to the marriage, and urge you to comply. But, remember, avoid the fatal error of this speechless guest in the parable. You must not only come to Christ, but you must do so in the appointed manner. The blessings which the Gospel offers can alone prepare us for the marriage-feast. The wedding garment must be put on, which includes justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, and sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit. For this wedding-garment refers as much to holiness of heart as it does to justification. It is as true, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," as that without pardon no one shall enter heaven. "The old man, with his deeds," must be "put off;" and "the new man" must be "put on," which is "created according to God in knowledge, in righteousness, and in true holiness." The righteousness of Christ alone can give us a title to heaven, and the purifying grace of the Holy Spirit can alone prepare us for its happiness. And all who are found wanting in this respect shall be excluded from heaven. As this man was speechless, so will you, if you neglect to obtain the blessings that are so frankly and so freely offered to you in the Gospel. If you neglect the present day of your merciful visitation; if you live carelessly, merely because the world does so; if you are

ashamed of being religious; if you are more afraid of the jeers of the vulgar, the laugh of the ignorant, the mockery of the profane, than you are of the fierce wrath of offended heaven; we can only say you may be so, and you may go on, preferring your own judgments to the instructions of the Bible, and paying more regard to your fellow-men than to God. But, remember, if you die without having any interest in the justifying and sanctifying righteousness of Christ, God will put the same question to you that he put to the man in the parable, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" and however ably you may justify your present indifference about religion, your excuses will then utterly fail you, as refuges of lies; you will feel self-condemned, and you will remain speechless, because,

I. You cannot say that the gospel plan of man's recovery is unworthy of your belief and acceptance, as rational and immortal beings.

We are aware, that, at the present day, there are many who consider religion as a cunningly-devised fable—a fit instrument of ecclesiastical domination and of arbitrary political power, but as unworthy of the serious attention of a philosophical mind. In some instances, they condescend to allow that its advocates are well-meaning and harmless, though weak-minded men. But, in general, they consider them as either very ignorant or very designing, and that their religion is nothing more than the assumption of a grave exterior invented to cover the more glaring defects of the mind.* Eagle-eyed in detecting their errors, they are eloquent and effective in exposing them. Their persons and habits furnish materials for the bitter jest; their religious scruples are subjects of raillery; and their conduct excites both merriment and wit. In short, they agree with our own wicked Charles, in saying, that religion is quite unfit for a gentleman.

When we meet with such men upon their own ground, and foil them with their own weapons, which is by no means a very difficult task, they retreat behind entrenchments which they had not the skill to erect, and which they want capacity to retain. They retire upon the ranks of infidelity, defy the armies of the living God, and demand a single-handed contest with the Goliaths of their cause. Shielded by men who justly occupy a commanding attitude in the great republic of letters, no argument can shake the stubbornness of their cold and philosophic pride; no truth can affect the lifeless indifference of their absolute ignorance; no entreaties can awaken them from their stupor of fatal self-complacency. But there is nothing so easy as to remain in ignorance of those evidences of Christianity which satisfy all who examine them, and under that ignorance to scorn them. This is as easy as to quench the light of natural virtue by a course of profligacy, and to acquire a contempt of all goodness by familiarity with vice.* And it is a lamentable truth, that those men who are most honoured in the temple of infidelity, have been the most profligate in the orgies of debauchery. In examining the evidences of our common faith, their minds were warped by prejudice, and pre-occupied by false theories, before their judgments had come to a determination. They were either inflated with conceit, and so wanted proper humility of spirit; or were immoral, and consequently exerted every faculty to invent excuses. They were fully disposed to embrace, in contradiction to reason and evidence, every error that flattered their appetites and passions. Many of them were absolute buffoons, who sported with every thing sacred, and turned even the belief of a Deity into a jest; or, they were lively and volatile, but superficial men, who had great literary information, and a desultory knowledge of the sciences, but with little solidity of understanding, and less acquaintance with nature. They were utter strangers to the genius of Christianity, entertained a rooted aversion to its ordinances, dwelt altogether upon its abuses, and rejected it from the distortions of its character and the vices of its advocates.†

But if we are to judge of the goodness of a cause from the number of its illustrious advocates, where shall we meet with learning so profound, with genius so resplendent, and with names so illustrious, as the innumerable defenders of our faith? The literature of Greece and of Rome, the reasonings of the Lyceum, the eloquence of the academic grove, the philosophy of the schools, and all the boasted researches of modern infidelity, are but as the drop of the bucket, or the small dust in the balance. And were this the proper place and time, we should feel the highest satisfaction in entering into the argument, which would so

* De la Rochefoucault.

* Saturday Night.
† Crichton's Converts.

triumphantly justify our adherence to the religion of Jesus, rather than to the mummeries of an infidel philosophy. Nor are there wanting around us heads to think, and hearts to feel, the force of this argument, and appreciate its worth; who could relish the institution of such a comparison, and sympathize with us in the proud triumphs that we feel, as we glory in the rock on which our living temple is built, and exult in the impregnable bulwarks of our Zion. But though we cannot with propriety enter upon this extended field, we must be permitted to say, that the infidel was never more unfortunate than when he challenged us to meet with him on such grounds. Our religion seeks no concealment; it dreads no assaults; it fears no comparison. Indeed, if it will not stand the test of sober reason and of argument, it will not long have place in the world among enlightened men. And those who shrink from such tests, and declaim against such a scrutiny, only show their want of confidence in the cause which they profess to espouse.* The Brahmin with his Shaster, the Iman with his Koran, and the Catholic with his priest, may have solid reasons for protecting ignorance and avoiding discussion; but Christianity courts the light, and has nothing to apprehend from the most subtle, learned, and ingenious of its adversaries. It has gained fresh lustre from their discoveries; and those sciences which, in their infancy, were supposed to threaten its very existence, have, in their advanced state, proved magazines to supply new proofs of its truth, and armouries to furnish new weapons for its defence.†

If human testimony, then, is allowed to be any criterion of faith, and certainly it ought in justice to be as admissible in favour of religion as in opposition to it, where shall we meet with names so illustrious as Pascal, Leibnitz, and Euler, the most profound mathematicians of any age? Where shall we find men, in the ranks of infidelity, whom we could oppose to Haller, or Milton, or Blackstone, or Bacon, or Locke? Is there a single mind, enlisted under the dark banners of unbelief; or can their united intelligence, from the deistical Herbert to the heretical Rousseau, from the talented Shaftesbury to the subtle Hobbes, from the titled Bolingbroke to the philosophical Hume, from the sneering Gibbon to the atheistical Voltaire—can one, or can all these men, supported by the various tribes of modern sophists, who babble in society, or who swell the page of literary fame, can they cope, for a single moment, with the gigantic powers of a Newton? Possessing the finest capacities that ever distinguished the human mind, he entertained the profoundest regard for religion, and zealously devoted himself to its interests. Like David's worthies, his arm is irresistible in battle, he breaks through opposing armies, and he brings us water from the well of Bethlehem! The same splendid mind that abandoned the beaten paths of error, and destroyed prejudices in science, was equally capable of detecting fraud in religion, and of exposing defects in the evidences of revelation. And yet this man was a Christian; he devoted much of his time to the study of the Bible; and he confessed, the more he read the more decided was his persuasion of its truth, and the greater was his admiration of its excellence. And this belief was founded on the most accurate researches into its history, the authenticity of its records, the completion of its prophecies, the character of its evidences, and the arguments of its adversaries.*

All this should have its due weight with you; and although we cannot ask you to believe in Christianity from this alone, yet it should have considerable influence on your minds, in deciding on that evidence which you cannot personally examine. And while the talented and the well-informed are able to read and to judge for themselves, it is our duty to state the results of our investigations to those who have neither leisure nor opportunity to engage in such extended researches. It must, then, be peculiarly gratifying to find, that there is a far greater preponderance of testimony, a far more splendid array of names in favour of our common faith, than in favour of those who swell the ranks of infidelity. This circumstance should have its own importance with you, which is considerable. And when we turn our minds to that evidence, on which these illustrious and distinguished men came to such a conclusion, the testimony seems to us irresistible. It is complete in its nature, superabundant in its quantity, perfect in its kind, and irresistible in its force; although it no more presses itself upon the notice of the irreligious, than the magnificence of the midnight sky constrains the vulgar mass of mankind to adore the power

* Stuart's Hebrews.
† Crichton's Converts.

* Crichton's Converts.

and majesty of the Creator. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handy-work; yet few read the great lessons of theology that are inscribed upon the skies. The evidences of Christianity, and the brighter glories of the divine character, are spread over the page of revelation, and fewer still are found to examine and embrace the offers that are there.* But this will not excuse us on the judgment-day. Our relations to God are clearly stated in the Scriptures; the gospel plan of man's recovery is unfolded with an accuracy that proclaims its truth; God is exhibited as just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly and the offers of pardon, and peace, and acceptance, are made upon such terms, and in such a manner, as to render every one of us inexcusable. And if the simplest individual present examine the Scriptures for himself, in a proper frame of mind, and with a becoming spirit, he will trace the finger of Omniscience there; he will discover the truth, and he will read the mercy of God. But if you wilfully remain ignorant of the Gospel; if you spurn its claims upon your faith; if you reject its doctrines; and if you refuse the obedience which it demands, you will only expose yourselves to the curse which it threatens; and when the King shall enter the guest chamber; when he sees you without an interest in his purchased salvation, and when he puts the heart-searching question, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, without having on a wedding-garment?" you will feel, that never having seriously and devoutly examined the evidences of Christianity, you dare not pronounce them defective. Conscious, moreover, that you have ventured to live in opposition to its doctrines, as far as you knew them, and that you have dared to act in hostility to its spirit, equally regardless of its high rewards, and of its terrible denunciations, your present complacency will forsake you, your infidel courage will fail, and you will remain speechless.

II. You will be speechless, because you cannot plead ignorance of the plan of salvation.

In the Scriptures of truth, there are many things hard to be understood. The exhibition that is given us of God, the divine mysteries of the Trinity, the person of Christ, the vital union of the believer with Christ as his Head, the doctrines of election and of reprobation, and many other mysteries both of the wisdom and of the counsel of God, though by no means opposed to our reason, are yet removed far above the capacities and the comprehension of our finite minds. The sceptic discards all such mysteries, simply because he cannot understand them; and the imprudent theologian, with an equal want of modesty, though with more reverence for the Scriptures, endeavours to explain what God has concealed, simply because he thinks nothing should be received which cannot be understood. But it is a singular fact, a fact which must have struck your own minds, that the statements of the Scriptures are plain and easily understood, just in proportion as they are important, and necessary to the welfare of man. We cannot understand the being or the essence of God, but his existence is plainly declared. Our knowledge of the former could serve no intelligible purpose, but our acquaintance with the latter is essential; for "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, as well as that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The introduction of moral evil into our world is a problem which we can never solve; but nothing is more intelligible than that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We can never enter into the counsels of peace, or unfold the time and the manner of the Saviour's covenant engagements with God; but no truth can be more easily understood than that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The new birth, and our vital union with the Saviour, is a mystery which we cannot describe; but no statement is more easily understood, or more practically levelled to the very meanest capacity, than the Apostle's declaration: "Faith without works is dead." We all understand the test of character which the Saviour himself proposed: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments."

And can you plead ignorance of these plain and practical statements of the Bible? We can hardly suppose that there is a single individual here who is in such a state of unlettered ignorance as to be unable to read the Word of God. But even granting that this should be true, you cannot, you dare not plead your ignorance as an excuse. How many years has the Gospel been preached to you from this place? How often have you listened to the servants of God, who proclaimed, in their Master's

* Saturday Night.

name, the glad tidings of salvation? No doubt much would be said that you might not be able fully to understand. Much might be lost through your unlettered ignorance; still more from inattention; and, most of all, from absolute carelessness. It may be quite true, that the Word of God made no impression on your hearts, awakened no serious thoughtfulness in your minds, and produced no love to the Saviour in your breasts. All this may be perfectly true; but it is equally true that you have been told, in every sermon which you have heard, and in every prayer to which you have listened, that you were sinners, and that, as such, you were exposed to the miseries of this life—to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever. And you have been told, with equal plainness, that Christ died to save sinners; and that you may be saved by believing on his name. There is no ignorance that cannot understand these statements; there is no sound mind, even of the weakest capacity, that cannot comprehend them. Your ruined state, both by nature and practice, and the gospel plan of man's recovery through faith in the righteousness of Christ, have been explained in your hearing, with a frequency and with a plainness that would have been much more than sufficient to clear your views upon worldly matters, and to satisfy your minds concerning your right of succession to a temporal inheritance, however intricate and involved. These statements are this day repeated and pressed upon your serious attention. We are all, from the highest to the lowest, from the richest to the poorest, from the most learned to the most ignorant person here—we are all sinners before God, exposed to the curse of the law, unable to obey its commands, and obnoxious to the wrath of God. But Jesus Christ engaged to be our surety. In the fulness of time, he came into our world, and fulfilled all his engagements in this matter. He suffered the penalty of the law which we had incurred; he obeyed its precepts, and he now offers himself as the "end of the law for righteousness," to all who believe. We would then say to you, in his name, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The offers of mercy that we make to you are as generous as they are free, and they are as plain as they are sincere. And if there is any difficulty in understanding the proposals of the Saviour, it originates in the heart, and not in the head. It is not because you cannot understand the offer, but because you will not come to him, that you may have life. Were any one of you in debt, and were you, on account of your inability to pay it, deprived of your liberty, and cast into prison; and were some generous individual offering to pay your debt, and set you at liberty, how soon would you understand his proposals, embrace his offers, and claim your purchased freedom! Were your health and your life threatened by the ravages of some dangerous disease, and were the services of the medical practitioner urged upon your acceptance, how eagerly would you consent to his proposals, and avail yourselves of his kindness! Were you perishing for lack of bread, and were you told that there was corn in Egypt, how willingly would you go down and buy! And how is it that the understanding, even of absolute and unlettered ignorance, is so acute, the judgment so clear, and the conduct so prompt, in every thing of a worldly character, and, at the same time, so impenetrably ignorant, so inveterately stupid, and so absolutely obtuse, in every thing that relates to the soul? The language that is used in both cases is literally the same, and therefore equally intelligible. But the problem is of easy solution. The horrors of a dungeon, the miseries of disease, and the agonies of famine, peal like thunder in the ear, and speak in a tone that refuses denial; while the moral malady of the soul is never felt, its complainings are never heard, and its remedies are all rejected, because considered unnecessary. But this indifference to salvation does not arise from ignorance of its terms, or its plan, or its benefits. It is because you do not feel, and not because you have never been told, that you are "poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked." And it is for the very same reason that you do not make application for that "gold that is tried in the fire, that you may be rich, and for that white raiment that you may be clothed." The great principle on which you come to the house of God is mere habit, instead of the exalted motive of spiritual desire. And the very frequency with which you have listened to the mere sound of the Gospel makes you careless about its sense, and indifferent to the meaning which its terms convey.

We have endeavoured to be faithful to God, and dutiful to you, in what we have now said. But we cannot close our remarks on this particular, without reminding you once more of the kindness of God, in exhibiting the truths of revelation, with a plainness and perspicuity that bear considerable proportion to their importance. The deeper

mysteries of the Scriptures, and the fainter outlines of divine truth, which are greedily seized by the infidel, and the literary wrangler, are not so essential to salvation as those which are undisputed. The great principles of the Gospel, and the leading features of the new covenant, are written as with a sunbeam throughout the Bible; and they are unfolded in terms of such unrivalled simplicity, as to defy misapprehension. Abuse not his goodness, by lending your ear to the sound of the gospel invitation, while you habitually shut your hearts against its offers. Brave not the danger of listening to its language, while at the same time you remain unaffected by the sentiments which its terms express. Be assured, that by nature, as well as practice, you are lost; and that without an interest in Jesus, you never can be saved. Plead not your ignorance of the necessity of trusting entirely in Christ for salvation, when it is so expressly declared, "By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified;" and when we now tell you, that "sinners shall not stand before him in the judgment." Do not tell us that you were ignorant of the necessity of that holy life, which is the native consequence of faith in his blood; for we unequivocally declare, that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If you do not live a life of holiness in this world, you never shall enjoy a life of happiness in the next. This is declared to us in the Word of God, with a plainness that the most ignorant must understand it, the most careless must see it, and the most irreligious must feel it; and his word is like himself, unchangeable. If, therefore, God has declared, "the wicked shall be cast into hell;" if he has told us, "he that believeth not shall be damned;" and if has threatened, that "neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;" we may be as fully persuaded that he will execute these terrible threatenings, as we must feel convinced that he has made them. The matter is too palpable to admit of either shuffling or evasion. And if Satan himself, with his accustomed effrontery, should try to calm your fears, by whispering his original falsity, "you shall not surely die," remember he was a liar from the beginning. Whatever he may say, and whatever your own hearts may believe, "the wages of sin are death;" and "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but one jot or tittle shall in nowise pass from the Scriptures, till all be fulfilled."

Nor do we see any thing in this but unmingled goodness. Were God to overlook the claims of his holiness; were he to pass from the demands of his justice; were his threatenings against sin to be suspended; were the bolted thunders of his wrath to be hushed; and were sinners indiscriminately admitted to heaven, they could not, they would not be happy there. The miser would be wretched without his gold, the vain man without his titles, the licentious without his illicit wanderings, and the drunkard without his cups. Having been accustomed in this world to the company of the profligate and the irreligious, such a man could feel no happiness in the society of saints and of angels. The golden harps of heaven, the songs of angels, and the praises of the blessed around the throne, would continue to him there what they are to him here, an intolerable burden, a weariness, and an irksome task. The river of pleasures that makes glad the city of God would flow with neither happiness nor comfort to him; its waters would neither quench his thirst nor refresh his soul. The tree of life, with its "twelve manner of fruits," would be loathed by him as "light bread;" and his soul would long for the flesh-pots of Egypt. Unacquainted with the language of that happy land, ignorant of its manners, a stranger to its inhabitants, unprepared for its climate, and a daring rebel against its King, he would feel solitary amid the myriads of heaven, desolate though enthroned, and miserable though standing within the radiant blaze of that bright circle who contemplate the perfections, share in the triumphs, and rejoice in the splendours of an arisen God! But no intrusion like this can take place. Holiness guards the gates of heaven, and demands perfect purity in all who enter there. "For there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. Blessed, therefore, are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Sermon by the Rev. Andrew Gilmour, Greenock.
Sermon by the Rev. W. Mackenzie, Comrie.

THE DANGER OF COMING TO THE MARRIAGE-FEAST WITHOUT A WEDDING GARMENT;

Sermon by the Rev. Andrew Gilmour.—*Concluded.*

In the Scriptures of truth, nothing is more remarkable than the plainness and simplicity of their statements. Even if it were granted, says an eloquent living author,* that, in their mode of revealing certain articles of faith, or in their allusions to subjects of polity and ceremony, such a degree of obscurity attaches to them, as calls for industry and learning in the interpreter; it is not less true that, in whatever relates either to the great principles whence virtue should emanate, or to the detail of the virtues and the vices—to the application of general rules to particular relations, the inspired writers leave nothing to be desired, or even imagined, in the way of perspicuity, definitiveness, iteration, or diversified expression and exemplification. Considered merely as a book of morality, the Bible is incomparably a more complete, intelligible, and popular manual than any other composition. In this respect, though the teacher may find room for the enforcement of rules, he is scarcely at all called upon to exercise his skill as expositor. The Bible, in the plain matters of duty, of temper, and of social behaviour, comes home at once to the understanding of the rudest part of mankind; and is very nearly the very same book to the peasant as to the doctor of divinity. And yet this is the book of which infidelity would rob us, under the plea that it is from its very nature unfit for God to bestow, or man to receive. They have drunk deeply in the streams of classical literature, they have drained to its very dregs the murky cup of heathen morality, and they have wallowed in the still more polluted fountain of the human heart; and, thus qualified, they can sit in judgment on the hallowed waters of Zion, and pass a sentence of condemnation on the claims of Siloa's sacred stream. And yet with all their unparalleled arrogance, they rarely attempt any thing more than to carp at the mysterious parts of the Sacred Volume. These they endeavour to isolate as much as possible from all its sublimer and less questionable portions; they pass over in silence the great mass of its contents, and fix, with malicious subtilty, upon a few hard sayings which they endeavour to wrest from their connexion, and pervert to foreign purposes; and which, by being placed together, repeated with disingenuous exaggerations, and in their condensed form, surrounded by the distorted accompaniments of hostile matter, present a far more formidable appearance than really belongs to them, or than they are felt to possess when they are met with in the fair and honest perusal of the Sacred Volume itself. They display none of the wisdom, and less of the candour of that amiable man,* who said, concerning the writings of a heathen philosopher,† "That so much of them as could be understood, must be pronounced excellent

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* Socrates. † Heraclitus.

and admirable; and that that portion might be believed to be so which could not be understood." The malignity of their hearts prevents them from being benefited by such an example of modesty and fairness. They disdain no artifice, however mean, and they withhold no ridicule, however unjust, to excite the lowest and the basest passions of human nature against revelation. An awful spirit of blindness has fallen upon them, and their virulence of temper is neither suited to the gravity of such a momentous question, nor calculated to lead to a satisfactory termination.*

But there is another class of individuals whose lives are equally unaffected by the restraints of the Gospel, and whose hearts are as strongly fortified against the influence of the truth. Nor are we to seek for those men in the ranks of infidelity, or in the haunts of dissipation, and in the abodes of crime. No: their very lives are spent within the sound of the Gospel, the habitual regularity of their presence in the house of God seems necessary to the services of the sanctuary, and they appear almost as living fixtures in the temple below. Such men are skilled in theology, and critically accurate in all the niceties of controversial divinity. With business-like attention they watch the proceedings of the Sabbath. Curious and calmly at ease, they can listen to the scheme of redemption, stated, illustrated, and enforced; they can examine with numerical accuracy the proofs of human depravity, the necessary exercise of justice in punishing sin and sinners, and every false and wicked way; the covenant of grace, the character, offices, and work of the Redeemer, the free offers of pardon, and the promise of everlasting life. When they retire from the services of the sanctuary, whose excellence is estimated just in proportion as they have fallen short of, or exceeded the accustomed hour, they praise the splendours of eloquence, or they lash the dull monotonies of the pulpit; they name the several services of the day with arithmetical severity, speak of classical arrangement, and of the due proportion of one part to another; and with cool frigidity of sentiment, they will pass sentence on the whole as an excellent and an able exhibition; or, what is far more likely, as a lame and a worthless effort of human skill—as something that may be tolerated, but as quite unworthy of their high approbation. And all this is done with such a comfortable self-complacency, that superficial observers of human character, and even they themselves mistake it for superior intelligence, and for the fruits of a more intimate acquaintance with gospel truth. You may listen, but it will be in vain, to hear such men say, as they leave the house of God, "Ah, we were told this day that we were sinners, and as such exposed to present misery, and to everlasting ruin! But, blessed be God! we were likewise told of a Saviour; we were directed to that blood which can wash away the stain of every sin, and which is equally open to us all; we were offered pardon, and peace, and acceptance with God, through him who is as willing to save as he is able to redeem; we were entreated to repent of our sins, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might be saved; and we were commanded to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, the native and the necessary consequence of believing on his name. 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.'" Isaiah lvii. 7.

And how shall we speak to such men? how shall we turn their attention from the theory of the Gospel to its practice? from the notions of their heads to the feelings of their hearts? from their speculative acquaintance with the truth, to its practical influence in their walk and conversation? How shall we bring into solution those mental incrustations which prevent our language from carrying to the bosom those sentiments which we express? Shall we enter, with them, the field of argument, and be learned and acute in our refutations? The man who would proceed in any such manner is simple as a child; or has himself inhaled a debilitating influence from a poisoned atmosphere. On the ground of theory and speculation, the victims of such errors will be found to have lost irrecoverably all sense of the distinctive influence of truth and falsehood, though they can yet discriminate betwixt both the one and the other. Their minds do not float on the ocean of intelligence and common sense, and they spread no canvass to their salutary breeze. They steer not by that star—the star of Bethlehem, which shines brightest in the hemisphere of truth; they are drifted without

* Carpenter.

chart, or helm, or compass, into the tempestuous element of irreligion; they are lost to all practical purposes; and they are strangers to those havens where alone are to be found abundant rest, and peace, and joy. But, though the case is quite hopeless, as far as human agency is concerned, it is not so with God. It is our duty to use the means, and it is the Spirit's work to render them effectual. Earnestly and affectionately, therefore, would we still direct your attention to your present state and your future prospects, to the means of grace, and to the hopes of future glory, to the kind offers of the Gospel, and the fearful consequences of rejecting them. And "see that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." Heb. xii. 25.

In directing your attention to those words, we have already said, that, if you live and die without an interest in Christ, you will be inexcusable, because you cannot say that the proposed remedy is unworthy of your belief and acceptance, as rational and immortal beings. Neither can you plead as an excuse your ignorance of the Gospel plan of man's recovery. We now go on to say, that, if you live like the men of the world, and if you die in the same impenitent state, you cannot plead as an excuse for this irreligious life.

III. Your ignorance of its danger.

When God created our first parents, he made them perfectly holy, and perfectly happy. They were endued with a perfect capacity of knowing, and loving, and serving God; possessing perfect ability to fulfil all the duties of their high station, though free to fall. The law under which they received their existence, demanded perfect obedience to all its requisitions, and held out as the reward, the promise of everlasting life, with the highest rational and immortal enjoyments. But, while it promised life with all its happiness, as the reward of obedience, it also threatened to inflict the most signal vengeance on guilty offenders. For, "when the Lord God had taken man, he put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for, in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" or, as it might be more correctly rendered, "dying, thou shalt die." Its uncompromising declaration was, "The soul that sinneth it shall die; the wages of sin is death;" for, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them." Left to the freedom of their own will, our federal representatives violated the law, forfeited its immunities, and incurred its penalties. As the descendants of Adam, we are justly exposed to the legal consequences of his fall, and as the natural offspring of our guilty progenitor, we are exposed to the curse and condemnation of God, which are "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." But a way of escape has been devised, and executed, and unfolded in the Gospel. Christ Jesus offered himself in the covenant of grace, as the substitute, and surety, and representative of man. "In the fulness of time," he assumed our nature into personal union with his divinity, entered our world in his mediatorial character, and accomplished all his covenant engagements in the behalf of the chosen people of God. In their name he fulfilled the law which they were no longer either able or willing to obey; as their legal representative, he suffered the terrible penalty which they had incurred; and as their head of vital influence, he has taken possession of heaven, and of all the blessings which the law could confer. These blessings are now offered to us in his name. And they are offered to us in such language, that all can understand the proposal; while the terms or the conditions on which they are pressed upon our acceptance, are such as to render every one of us inexcusable. We are still required to obey the law as a rule of duty, without depending upon its awards for happiness here, or acquittal at the bar of God. We are commanded to accept of Christ as our surety, to embrace his offers as the end of the law for righteousness, and to rely with confidence on the promises of God for pardon, and peace, and sanctification, through the blood of Christ. The happy effects of acquiescence with this are easily discernible, even in this world. The truth of the Gospel is proved to us by its irresistible influence over the heart and the conduct of those men who, at one time, rejected its doctrines, and spurned its restraints. While the lovelier features of its character are commended to our warmest regard, by the holy example, the happy life,

and the triumphant death of those men whose characters are formed in the mould of the Gospel, and whose conduct is regulated by the principles of Jesus. "Mark thou the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is, indeed, peace." To accept of the offers of the Gospel, and to embrace the Saviour as he is exhibited to us there, is just to avoid all the penalties of the law, and to secure a right to all its promised blessings. It communicates that peace of mind which passeth all understanding, retrieves for us the forfeited favour of God, and restores to us the joys of his benign salvation. Deprive the man of the world of his corn, his wine, and his oil, and you take away all his enjoyments; but this is not so with him who embraces the gospel plan of man's recovery. Even when the believer in Jesus is in poverty, in rags, and in want, he can cheerfully take up the prophet's song, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." When he is deprived of friends and relations who were "dear to him as light and life," the silent tear, and the ill-suppressed sigh, may indicate the bleeding heart, and the bosom reft of all its earth-born joy, yet his hopes rise higher than the grave, his desires are not quenched in the tomb, and his language is the utterance of faith: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb; naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." When disease has laid him low, "when pain and anguish wring the brow," and when no "ministering angel" speaks comfort, or affords relief, we hear him inquiring, like Job, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" He nobly declares, with that venerable patriarch, "When I am tried, then shall I come forth as the most pure gold;" and, appropriating the grace that was promised to Paul, as an answer to his prayer for deliverance from bodily suffering, he likewise adopts the language of that unrivalled man, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for, when I am weak, then am I strong." And, when the grim king of terrors makes his personal approach, to complete the wreck which disease has begun; when he enters the good man's chamber; when he waves into inaction the

> "Great masters of the healing art—
> These mighty mock defrauders of the tomb;"

when he blanches every cheek by the visible emblems of his presence; and when he hushes all around, save the deep throbbings of the surcharged heart, into the cold silence of breathless solicitude, by his suspended commission, the dying saint smiles at the directed arrow, disregards its point, and in triumph takes up the Apostle's song, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And what is it that gives the believer such an infinite superiority over poverty and personal suffering, and all the desolating ravages of disease? What is it that makes him calm, collected, and firm, when entering "the valley of the shadow of death?" And how is it that he is equally unmoved whether he steps from earth to heaven—from a palace or a cottage—from a throne or a prison—from the tender embraces of family affection and domestic regard, or the cold attentions of hired mercenaries? What is it that preserves him in his firm resolve, with a cheek unblanched, and with an eye unquailed, as he dauntlessly looks upon the gateway of death to the world unseen; even when that leads by the prison or the gloomier dungeon, the fiery stake or the ignominious scaffold? It is not because religion blunts the finer feelings of the heart, benumbs the tender sensibilities of the soul, or renders us insensible to the sufferings of humanity and the charities of our nature; it is just because the Gospel is true, and because its promises are realized even here. It averts not suffering and the stroke of death, but it secures an interest in that covenant which promises life and immortality to every believer in Jesus; it destroys not the natural consequences of sin, as an indwelling principle, and as a stimulating element of moral character, but it directs to the blood of Christ which washes from the guilt and the pollution of sin; it imparts no new faculties to the soul, but it brings us to the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit,

by which our natures are changed, our dispositions renewed, and our whole character assimilated to the image of God. This is the native consequence of believing the Gospel, and of embracing its offers. And thus we have a class of evidence to prove its truth, and to justify our dependence on its statements, infinitely more irresistible than the most rigid demonstration.

But the character and the conduct of those who reject the Gospel plan of man's recovery, who never investigate its evidence, who feel no anxiety to obtain its blessings, and who practically despise its threatenings, furnish us with a mass of testimony corroborative of the same statement. Indeed, we shall scarcely discover a class of evidence that more irresistibly proves the truth of the Gospel. The man who lives without religion, is a stranger to real happiness. His enjoyments are altogether of an animal nature; he acts as if he were nothing elevated above the brutes of the field; and his intelligence is never exercised but to create some refinement in his sensual gratifications. And when these fountains are dried up, from age, or sickness, or incapacity, or a want of some necessary material, then he drags out the most miserable existence, in fretfulness, remorse, and irritated discontentment. Affliction to such a man has no balm; disease has no remedy; and in death he is a stranger to hope. He has nothing to oppose to the reverses of this world. When wealth forsakes him, when friends are faithless, when foes pursue, he has nothing to ward the blow, to disarm affliction, or repel its dart. And, when his mortal career is run; when he eyes the dark symbols of the angel of death; when he looks into the gloomy mansions of the dead; when he casts his eye forward to eternity, all is dim uncertainty, or hopeless despair. A review of his life gives him no satisfaction; his former associates can give him no comfort; and his conscious irreligion can afford him no hope. He lived without God, so he dies without hope, and his final portion is assigned to him in outer darkness, where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. There the worm dieth not, and there the fire is not quenched.

And is it possible for any thing to prove more irresistibly the truth of the Gospel? It tells us plainly, that if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be happy here and hereafter. All who have put the truth of this statement to the test of actual experiment, have found it to be strictly and literally true. There is not a single instance, from the commencement of time till the present moment, of any one being unhappy who embraced the religion of Jesus. The universal testimony of every dying believer has been, that they have been happy, just in proportion as they have been holy, and devoted to God. And if we always find that to be religious is to be happy in this world, according to the promise of the Gospel, we have the utmost reason to believe that we shall be happy hereafter; for this is another part of the same promise. And if one part always proves to be true, surely the other will be equally so.

But the wicked man experiences the truth of gospel revelation as fully as the righteous. It tells him that to indulge in sin, is only to plunge into sorrow while here, and "to treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The first part of this declaration, every wicked and irreligious man feels to be true; and they may rest assured, that the second part of this statement shall likewise be verified to their fearful experience. For, as assuredly as the irreligious man is unhappy here, so assuredly shall he be miserable hereafter. The Word of God declares this to be so; experience corroborates the declaration; and we believe that "one jot or tittle shall not pass from the Scriptures, till all be fulfilled."

And can you say that you are ignorant of these things? Does not the Bible declare this? does not the history of our species illustrate the important fact? do not your own hearts speak the very same language? and do not your consciences tell you that it is true? Dare you then plead that you are ignorant of the present danger, and the future consequences of an irreligious life? *Can* you, *dare* you say, that we are not sufficiently explicit in laying before you the scheme of salvation, the happiness and the peace of mind of embracing its offers, with the fearful results of rejecting them? You must first blot the transactions of this day from your memory; your religious privileges from infancy must be forgotten; and the place that gave you birth must be swept from the map of the world. But if this may not be; if you cannot plead that you are levelled with the brutes that perish; if the statements of the Bible are inscribed on the

heart; if you cannot erase from memory the truths that are written there; if you dare not deny the warnings, entreaties, and expostulations which have been addressed to you this day; and if you would not renounce the land of your fathers, neither can you plead ignorance of the dangers of irreligion. And if all this rise up as swift witnesses to condemn you before a human tribunal, how terrible must be your speechless agony before a heart-searching and a rein-trying God!

Why then, my friends, will you perish, when a refuge is before you, and you are invited to flee to it? Why will you die, when Christ is as willing as he is able to save you; and when God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn and live? At this very moment he is ready to receive every repentant and returning sinner; to pardon all your offences, however numerous and aggravated; to sanctify you by the influences of his Spirit; and to make you meet for the enjoyments of heaven. The statement of Scripture concerning the efficacy of Christ's death, and the unconditional calls of the Gospel, are a sufficient warrant for every one to apply for the benefits of the Saviour's mediation; for none are excluded, but they who exclude themselves. The Gospel invites all, without distinction, to come to Christ, to submit to his government, and to partake of the blessings of redemption. Its language is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The offers of pardon and acceptance with God, are made in the plainest and most explicit terms. With all the tenderness of a parent, he expostulates with you on the absolute necessity of a Saviour, the infinite ability of Christ to redeem, the free offers of his spotless righteousness, the happiness of all who embrace them, and the aggravated condemnation of those who reject them. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

IV. You cannot plead as an excuse for your wickedness, the necessity of an irreligious life from the decrees of God.

There are many men who are acute, clear-sighted, and rational on every subject but religion. They can point out the necessary connexion that there is betwixt cause and effect, in all the departments of physical science; but whenever religion comes to be the subject of examination, reason is violated, and the claims of common sense are rejected. They engage in agriculture or in commerce; they direct their energies to business or to the higher walks of professional life, without for a moment referring to the secret purposes of God. They educate their children in the very same principles, telling them that the hand of the diligent maketh rich, whereas idleness clothes a man with poverty and rags. And they devote their sons to the life of a mechanic or an agriculturist; to the study of commerce or of law, of physic or of divinity, as circumstances may permit, or as convenience may allow. And in doing all this, they feel that they are free moral agents, and under no physical restraint or compulsion. Nor do they ever even allude to the decrees of God, although they frankly admit that these apply to time as well as to eternity; to the life that now is, as well as to that which is to come. Accordingly, the mechanic devotes his attention and his efforts to years of servitude and exertion. His success is equal to his exertion, and his rewards are proportioned to both. The agriculturist tears up his fallow-ground, and sows in seed-time the precious grain. In due time he reaps the very same kind of grain that he sowed; and the abundance of his harvest is, in all ordinary cases, proportioned to his labour. The man of science, too, devotes his days to study, and his hours to unwearied exertion; while, in the flickerings of the midnight lamp, he plys his unsubdued energies in the intellectual toil. And his successful exertions are crowned with the most splendid rewards. In all these cases, and in every other thing that relates to active life, they admit that without the means the end never can be accomplished. And if exertions are made, and yet the desired object remains unaccomplished, they never impute the failure to the decrees or the secret purposes of God, but to a want of skill, or prudence, or management in the agent; to the unsuitableness of the means employed; or to some other cause which could not be controlled. And yet, notwithstanding all this, whenever these very men are urged to become religious, and to attend to the means of grace, which are appointed to make them so, they scari-

fice all their common sense, their prudence, and their reason, by interposing as an insuperable barrier, the doctrines of election and of reprobation. In religion they wish to make the secret purposes of God the rule of their duty, and as these are not and cannot be known, they remain in a state of inaction. While in every thing else they exercise their reason, and use the appointed means for the accomplishment of their purposes.

It is not our intention to digress into a full discussion of this subject, upon the present occasion. We can only say, that God leaves man inexcusable in religion, as in every thing else. In no instance does he interfere with the perfect freedom of the will, and in no matter, whether civil or religious, does he employ restraint or compulsion. In the ordinary affairs of life, you are all at liberty to adopt whatever profession you please, without the slightest reference to the decrees of God. You spend your time in idleness and sloth, or in diligence and industry, as principle and inclination may dispose you. You enjoy the evening walk with a friend, or you prosecute, in retirement, the more ambitious triumphs of intellectual exertion. You come to the house of God on the Sabbath day, or you misspend your hours at home. You listen to the proclamations of the Gospel while here, or you allow your thoughts to be engrossed by other subjects. But whatever you do, you must feel that you are perfectly and absolutely at liberty, and that in nothing you are acting from necessity, just like a clock or a watch, which moves merely as it is moved. If you do what is evil you suffer the consequences, and you bear all the blame. And if you do that which is right, you enjoy the advantages, and are entitled to praise. Why is the murderer exposed to the last fearful operations of the law? It would be no less cruel than unjust, to take away his life for a crime which he is forced to commit. But he is a free moral agent, and as such he is perfectly at liberty to choose what is good, and reject what is evil. Nor is it possible to maintain principles more directly opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, or to the dictates of reason, than to urge that man is not free, most perfectly free. Why was Achan put to death as a troubler in Israel, but because he disregarded the command of God, and took part of the spoil which was accursed of the Lord? This he acknowledges before Joshua, the princes, and the assembled elders. "Indeed," says he, "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them." He blames none but himself. And Joshua recognises the very same thing, when he answers, "Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones." He was a free moral agent, and as such accountable for his conduct, and responsible for his actions. He did that which was evil; he bore the blame; and he suffered the penalty. Indeed, the whole of revelation is written upon this very principle. Punishments are threatened to deter from what is evil, and rewards are promised to allure us to what is good. But we never think of threatening with destruction a clock or a watch if it goes wrong, or becomes irregular in its motions. Neither do we ever think of promising rewards as a mark of approbation. All these are applicable to man, and to man alone. And the reason is, he is perfectly left to the freedom of his own will when he sins, or when he abstains from what is evil. Accordingly, when Moses was about to be taken from the Israelites, he addresses them in the following eloquent and impressive manner, Deut. xxx. 15—20:—"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; (for he is thy life, and the length of thy days;) that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and

to Jacob, to give them." Deny, for a single moment, the free agency of man, and the passage before us has neither force nor meaning; but admit the principle, and it is not only intelligible, but full of the most eloquent and impassioned tenderness. Similar is the conduct and the admonition of Joshua, when he, too, was about to enter an unseen world. He collected the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and having called for their elders, and judges, and officers, he said, Josh. xxiv. 15, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This is an unequivocal declaration of man's perfect freedom, not only in choosing what is good, but in acting up to this choice. Nor did the doctrine seem novel to the Israelites, difficult to be understood, or impossible to be acted upon. They made not a single remark with regard to the decrees of God, as affecting either their faith or their practice. They received the command, as every man of common sense would understand it, and they replied in the same plain, intelligible, and unsophisticated manner. Verse 16—18, "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed; and the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land; therefore will we also serve the Lord, for he is our God." Deny the perfect freedom of the will in choosing or in rejecting good and evil, or question man's ability to act up to his choice, and you destroy the propriety and the meaning of Joshua's charge, and of the people's answer; you render man as irresponsible for his actions as a piece of inanimate matter; and you degrade the laws of God and of man to a moral absurdity. Upon this horrible principle the murderer is as guiltless as his bloody knife; and the assassin is as innocent as the dagger which he drives home to the heart of his victim. It is not thus that the Bible explains the matter; nor did Moses or Joshua understand it so; neither did He who was greater than all his servants, give countenance to such a fatal error. His life, as well as every thing that he said or did, recognises the free agency of man. And in his expostulations we find him declaring, "Ye *will* not come to me that ye may have life." But upon no occasion do we find either the Saviour, or his disciples acting under his direction, making the secret purposes of God the rule of duty, or the doctrines of election and of reprobation any barrier to our personal salvation. And it is only upon this great principle that we preach to you the Gospel, entreat you to be reconciled to God, and urge you to flee to the Saviour. Beware, then, of those theological refinements; renounce those ingenious niceties; and shake off the dangerous influence of those metaphysical quibbles, that throw a veil of mystery over the plainest statements of the Bible, and with a show of wisdom and of philosophy, falsely so-called, not only trick you out of your common sense, but cheat you out of your immortal souls. We would lay it down as a rule to suspect every dogma that is opposed to reason and to common sense, and which requires human ingenuity to enforce it. There is nothing in the Bible that is opposed to either, though there is much that is above our comprehension. And, be assured, that the doctrines of grace, and the gospel scheme of redemption are all so plainly and intelligibly stated in the Scriptures, that the very weakest mind can easily understand them.

But our want of time forces us to close our remarks. In doing so, we must, in justice to ourselves, as well as to you, declare, that we maintain not only the perfect freedom of the will, but the doctrine of the positive decrees of God from all eternity; that man must himself work out his salvation with fear and trembling, and yet we advocate absolute and unconditional election; that man is commanded to do every thing himself, to secure his personal redemption; that he always finds his strength from on high proportioned to his day; that it is altogether his own personal fault if he is unsuccessful; and, yet that it is God alone who is in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. In one sense, man can do every thing; in this sense he is commanded to do it, and threatened with the most fearful consequences if he refuse. And in another sense he can do nothing.

But however pleasing, as well as easy, it is to unfold these several doctrines, in all their scriptural accuracy, harmony and consistency, we must at present refrain.

Let no one, then, excuse his irreligious life, by pleading the decrees of God. These have no more influence over the mind in religion than they have in all the ordinary affairs of life. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The conscience of every condemned sinner will admit the justice of his sentence at the last day; and it will constitute a principal ingredient in that eternal misery, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," that he alone is to blame. It will be a terrible aggravation to his pain to reflect that mercy was offered, and he rejected it; that salvation was urged upon his acceptance, and he refused it; that he was warned of his danger, and he despised it; that he enjoyed the most invaluable privileges, but did not improve them; and that a wedding-garment was offered to him, but he refused to wear it. For no man will then be able to plead that he sought divine assistance without obtaining it. The man without the wedding-garment had no desire for it, as he could have had it by applying to the ruler of the feast; and, on this account, he was bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness, where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. If you desire to be saved from hell, to be united with Christ, and to be ushered to glory at last, you will use the appointed means, without the slightest reference to the secret purposes of God. And if you attend to the means, God has pledged his veracity to render them effectual. You will in due time reap if you faint not. You will experience the truth of his promises while in this world; and at death you shall be ushered into "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

THE DUTY OF STIRRING UP OURSELVES TO TAKE HOLD OF GOD;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. W. Mackenzie.—(*Concluded from page* 73.)

The prophet does not complain so much that no one took hold of God, as that no one was stirring up himself to the exercise of that privilege and duty.

From this it is evident, that though we cannot of ourselves take hold of God effectually, yet we are to endeavour so to do. Means are to be used; and, in the use of these means, we are to try to stretch the withered hand of faith, to move the bound tongue of prayer, to open the blind eyes—take hold of the Rock that is higher than ourselves.

It is also evident, that personal and private means are to be used. It is not complained that no congregation, no city, no nation, stir up themselves, but that none stirreth up *himself* to take hold of thee.

And it is also evident, that extraordinary means are to be used. A great and general neglect of the ordinary means of grace is complained of, when it is said, "there is none that calleth upon thee;" but this was much occasioned by a still greater evil, that few or none were striving after eminent holiness and nearness to God, by stirring up themselves by extraordinary efforts to take hold on him. It is to be always remembered, however, that there can be no use of extraordinary means that is not accompanied by a diligent and regular attendance upon all the ordinary means whereby Christ doth communicate the blessings of salvation.

These observations being premised respecting the exercise of stirring oneself up to take hold of God, we may mention four leading particulars implied in it.

I. It implies an earnest endeavour to obtain deep and solemn, and humbling impressions of divine things on the soul.

The majority of men have intolerably mean thoughts of God. They content themselves with a few superficial ideas of his character, which produce no determinate impression on their minds; and hence they treat him in a way they would not dare for a moment to think of treating an earthly superior. In the exercises of worship, they offer him the torn and the blind, and the lame for sacrifice; and some even of those whose souls may be ultimately saved, are too habitually guilty in this respect. But the truly

godly man seeks to have such views of the majesty and holiness, and terror and grace of God as fill his soul with deep and growing reverence, awe, and love. Such were the views of God which Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Job, Ezra, Paul, Peter, and all the saints, laboured more and more to realize. And these views of God gave them awful impressions of the nature and evil of sin, of their own innate depravity, of their dependence on sovereign grace, of the marvellous loving God in redemption, of the misery of an unconverted state, of the torments of hell and the glories of heaven. Such impressions of divine things made them see the frivolity of the common pursuits of mankind; made them feel, and speak, and act as inhabitants of a different world, as an angel would do were he for a season to sojourn amongst us. "My flesh trembleth because of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments." "Horror took hold on me, because of the wicked which keep not thy law." "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Such were those strong and solemn impressions of God and men, and eternity, on the souls of the saints, which made them act and endure as seeing Him who is invisible;" and such are the frames of soul which every one who aspireth after eminent godliness will certainly labour after and exercise himself unto.

2. Stirring up to take hold of God implies the setting apart of extraordinary times for prayer and seeking after God. *Calling* means ordinary, and habitual, and common exercises. Stirring up oneself to take hold on God means extraordinary and laborious exercises of prayer. Jacob thus stirred up himself when he wrestled all night with the angel; when he wept and made supplication. Gen. xxxii. 24—30. Hosea xii. 3—5. So did Joshua when he rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until even-tide. Josh. vii. 6—9. So did the eleven tribes when they went up and came into the house of God, and wept and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. Judges xx. 26. So did all the saints on all extraordinary and often on ordinary occasions. So did the head of the saints when he occupied whole nights in prayer to God.

Extraordinary times set apart for the express purpose of seeking the Lord, of growing in his image, and of arresting his judgments, and of bringing down effusions of his spirit, are exercises well known to the Church, and perhaps to every true member of Christ in all ages, especially in the night of spiritual desertion or of threatened and out poured judgments: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are upon the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Is. xxvi. 9. Such exercises at such times are appointed by the Lord to his people: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Is. xxvi. 20. And such is evidently the exercise of the Church described in Song. iii. 1. "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loved: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not." It is by such exercises as this that "the king is held in the galleries," (Song vii. 5); that he is "constrained" to come and abide with his Church and people; as Jesus, when he made as though he would have gone farther, was constrained by his disciples to tarry with them. Luke xxiv. 28, 29. When the Church was thus engaged, the Spirit filled the place where they were met as a rushing mighty wind. Acts i. 14. ii. 1, 2. By efforts like these, the Church burst the iron fetters and brazen gates where Peter was imprisoned. Acts xii. 5. By efforts like these, Moses and Aaron, and Hur, gave the victory to Israel over Amalek. Exod. xvii. 8—12. By efforts like these, Isaiah and Hezekiah overcame the hosts of Sennacherib, Is. xxxvii. 2; and at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep. "Ye receive not, because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts." James iv. 2—3.

But when the Lord's people do in a solemn and determined manner set themselves to seek him, that they may glorify him, and not in a trifling manner, for base and selfish ends, then it is that the Lord answers them in an extraordinary manner, and opens the windows of heaven; then it is that real and manifest progress is made in the divine life; then it is that the Lord takes special complacency in his people, as he did on Paul; then it is that he visiteth his heritage

with refreshing showers of grace. "Behold, he prayeth;" and addresses his church in these endearing terms: "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." Song vi. 4. "I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears." "As a prince thou hast had power with God, and hast prevailed." "Let me alone."

What power Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Daniel, obtained with God, by setting apart set times for extraordinary prayer, and confession, and pleading with him, and how much benefit to themselves and others; and if extraordinary prayer be thus so important a mean of stirring up ourselves to take hold on God, there is a

3d. Duty implied in this exercise, which greatly promotes and assists the exercise of prayer—fasting. There is no virtue or holiness in mere fasting; it is a "bodily exercise which profiteth nothing;" and it has been abused to superstitious purposes, and it has been carried to an injurious excess by imprudent persons. But it is an ordinance of God, to be used secretly and publicly. As a secret ordinance it may aid much in curbing and subduing the desires of the flesh; and both as a secret and public ordinance, it wonderfully aids and enlarges the soul in prayer and spiritual exercises. Perhaps we may say, that he who never joined fasting with extraordinary prayer, never knew what great enlargement of heart and nearness to God means. Spiritual fasting is spiritual feasting. David "chastened his soul with fasting," and his "knees were weak with fasting." Paul was "in fastings oft." Fasting is a constant scriptural accompaniment of all extraordinary exercises of confession and humiliation, both in secret and public. When queen Esther adventured her life for the deliverance of the Church from impending destruction, she said, "Go and gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night nor day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." Esther iv. 16. "When Daniel set his face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes, the angel Gabriel was instantly sent to him as one greatly beloved, and revealed unto him the prophecy about Messiah the Prince." Dan. ix. 3, 20—22. "And when he fasted full three weeks, the Lord himself appeared, and said, fear not, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." Dan. x. 2, 3, 11, 12. These testimonies to the acceptance of this exercise with the Lord, must be borne out in the experience of every soul exercised to godliness. They can set to their seals that the promise holds true, "that they who fast in secret, the Lord rewardeth openly." Matt. vi. 18. The nearest communion they ever had on earth, was during or soon after these exercises. And remarkable was the experience of Brainard, that apostolic saint in this respect. After every such stirring up of himself, the Spirit was manifestly poured out on his own soul, and those of his people; and the consequence of his earnest strugglings after God was, that the moral wilderness where he laboured became one of the sweetest, most fertile spots on the whole earth; it was indeed a Bethel. "Light brake forth there as the morning, health sprung forth speedily; and the Lord guided him continually, and satisfied his soul in drought, and made fat his bones, and he was like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." Is. lviii. 11.

The fourth and last thing we shall mention, as included in stirring up oneself to lay hold of God, is *holy watching*. It is through the Spirit that we take hold on God; and the Spirit is grieved and quenched by unwatchfulness. Circumspect and tender walking is necessary to the health, and vigour, and fruitfulness of the spiritual life. "Take in the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Watching against besetting sins, and temptations, and delays, and unto a vigorous, prayerful pursuit of holiness and performance of duty, and endurance of trial, is the frame of soul that fitteth for habitual taking hold of and walking with God. This prepares for all dispensations, whether of mercy or of judgment. And, therefore, it is said, just before the pouring out of the last vial of wrath, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments. And blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." And it is in this grace, alas! that all are so deficient; while the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Who, then, are they that stir up themselves to take hold of God? It is not he

who runs hither and thither after novelty in the public ordinances, but he who, on his knees in secret, is finding out new sins, and deeper deceitfulness in his heart every day. It is not the heady professor and prond criticiser of his teachers, but the silent, mourning, contrite, and broken-hearted, the self-condemning accuser of his own best performances. It is not the virulent railer at public sins, but he who carefully keeps himself from his own iniquity, yet sighs and cries for his own and the sins of the neighbourhood, the church, and the land. Neither is it the slothful professor who lies upon his face, but he who, in the vigorous use of every appointed means, stirs up the life that is in him, so that his profiting doth appear unto all. Neither is he who mourns for personal afflictions, but he who is grieved for the affliction of Joseph, and sorrows for the dishonour done to God's declarative glory, the contempt of the gospel of Christ, and the ruin of the souls of men.

How rare are such characters amongst us. Few, few, if there be even a single soul amongst us that in any eminent manner takes hold of God. And hence, there is no decided witness-bearing for God amongst us; and hence a contentedness in formality and false carnal security, having no *eminent*, scarcely *any* godly persons to measure ourselves by, we see not the height, and depth, and breadth of our own carelessness, carnality, and irreligion; and hence we are saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace; and hence there is no friend of God amongst us to intercede for our deliverance from spiritual and temporal plagues, no Aaron with his censer, no David who, with his burnt-offering and his intercession, to stay the angel of pestilence; and hence many do not know what they really need, but are making idols of outward amendments, and go not to stir themselves and others up to seek entire change of heart, and assimilation to the image of God, as the only successful method of arresting the desolating ravage of the moral plagues and abominations around us.

Wherein does the great strength of a church or nation consist? Not in the outward forms, privileges, and multitudes of the one, nor in the wealth, population, laws or armies of the other, but in having those among them who take hold of God. When Hezekiah and Isaiah took hold of God, Sennacherib and his hosts could not even approach Jerusalem. "For thou art the glory of their strength: in thy favour shall our horn be exalted. For the Lord is our defence; and the holy One of Israel is our King." And hence we may see from whence the true reformation of a church or nation proceedeth. Except it come from God it is a delusion of the devil; and if it come from God it proceedeth through the instrumentality of those whom he stirreth up to take hold of him. Such was the reformation effected by Jacob after being with God, he made his family put away their idols, and serve the Lord only; such that effected by Moses in the church and state of Israel, after he was forty days in the mount; such the reformation effected by Samuel, after fasting and prayer at Mizpeh; such the reformation, civil and ecclesiastical, effected by Jehoshaphet, Hezekiah, and Josiah, those godly and zealous men; such by Ezra and Nehemiah, they first stirred up themselves by prayer and fasting to take hold on God, and then brought their nation and church into a reformed state. And to pass over John Baptist, and Paul, and other New Testament reformers, how did Luther, and Calvin, and Zuinglius, and Cranmer, and Wishart, and Knox, Melville and Henderson, and all the old reformers begin their reforming career? by reforming themselves, by stirring up themselves to take hold on God, and then bringing the laws and institutions of the Church and State into conformity with the unchangeable laws of God. I pray that I may be mistaken; but when I see great changes set on foot, while at the same time, few or none of the agents or subjects of these changes do stir up themselves to take hold on God, or can endure the mention of God in connexion with their proceedings, I use the privilege and do the duty of my office, when I declare, that I cannot entertain a well-grounded hope that what has not begun with God, will end otherwise than in confusion, and trouble, and disappointment.

And, lastly, we learn the guilt of not stirring up ourselves to take hold on God. If so great and incalculable evil results from this neglect; and if it be the duty of every one, whether saint or sinner, whether in public or in private station, thus to stir up himself, then all the evils, private and public, civil and ecclesiastical, that result from the general neglect of this solemn duty, do lie at the door of every individual that does not stir up himself to take hold of God.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Discourse by the Rev. W. Mackenzie, Comrie.

KINGS OF PERSIA—NURSING FATHERS OF THE CHURCH:

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 1835, AT THE FORMATION OF THE COMRIE CHURCH ASSOCIATION.

By Rev. WILLIAM MACKENZIE,
Minister of Comrie.

"*Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes; and I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me.*"—Ezra vii. 27, 28.

It is extremely difficult to understand during its progress the course of God's providential dealings towards his Church. At eventide it shall be light, and Zion shall look back upon all the way by which the Lord her God has led her through the wilderness, and shall clearly see that goodness and mercy have followed her during all her days upon earth. But very often during her pilgrimage, by reason of dark and afflictive dispensations, of sin prevailing within and of enemies abounding without, she is constrained to say, "my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." Very often the darkest and most threatening dispensations have been the harbingers of the brightest and most prosperous days; have prepared for enlargement, purity, and peace; and not unfrequently the brightest morning has led to a day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy.

In the book of Ezra, there is a very interesting record of the dealings of God in his providence towards his visible Church under the Persian Empire. That empire, signified by the silver breast and arms of the Great Image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, performed very important services for the Church—a brief consideration of which, as they are recorded in the first seven chapters of Ezra, will exhibit to us wonderful instances of the watchful care of Providence for the Church; and will thus tend to place clearly before us the meaning of our text, and open up the way for some inferences as to what sentiments we should maintain, and what duties we should perform for the national Church of our own beloved land.

As the 70 years of their captivity in Babylon drew to a close, the Church might have hoped for some tokens of coming deliverance; but what did they see? The king, Belshazzar, and his whole court, their determined enemies, and Daniel, their only friend in authority, exiled from the court; and, as if the cup of their misery for 68 years was not yet full, the very vessels of the temple, which until now seem to have been reverenced even in Babylon, were taken and profaned at the impious feast of the king, his princes, his wives, and his concubines. The Church had never seen a darker moment; they were now drinking the dregs of their cup of bitterness, and wringing them out. But mark the

dealings of God. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote on the wall of the palace opposite to the king, Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin—God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it; thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting; thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain, and Babylon suddenly and most unexpectedly fell under the power of Darius the Median, and by the success in war of Cyrus the Persian, Dan. v. Respecting this Cyrus, who shortly succeeded to the supreme power, a prophecy had been given 200 years before, in which his very name was mentioned, Isaiah, xliv. 28. xlv. 1, 2. 4. "Thus saith the Lord of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me." In accordance with this prophecy, and with another in Jeremiah, limiting the duration of the captivity to 70 years, in the very first year of his reign, Cyrus the Great proclaimed that he was charged by God to build him a house in Jerusalem; and he sent Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and, under them, as many other Jews as pleased, with authority and instructions to rebuild the temple. He also authorized a voluntary contribution throughout his dominions for their assistance, and gave them up all the vessels of the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods. The first chapter of Ezra details at length how Cyrus fulfilled in regard to the temple the will of God intimated so long before by the prophet; but that chapter does not contain a complete detail of all his benefactions to the house of God, for we learn from chap. iii. 7, that he gave a grant of cedar trees in Lebanon for the building of the temple. "They gave money, also, unto the masons, and to the carpenters, and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia;" and from chap. vi. 4, we learn that he went so far as to include in his decree specifications for the building of the temple, and a command that the expenses should be given out of the king's house. It is difficult to say what more could have been done towards the erection of the temple than was done by the civil government of Persia in the first year of the reign of Cyrus the Great.

By the royal countenance and gifts, and by the freewill offerings of the people, tho foundation of the temple was laid, and for a time the building of the temple proceeded, Ezra chap. iii.; but the 4th chapter tells us how the prospects of the Church were unexpectedly beclouded. The aid of the civil government was diminished, and for a time withdrawn. For the enemies of Judah and Benjamin having first requested leave to join them in building, and being refused, "they weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius." They by these base means hindered the building of the temple for ten years, during the reigns of Cyrus and Ahasuerus (or Cambyses), until, in the reign of Artaxerxes (Smerdis the Magian), an usurper, they obtained a letter from him to stop it altogether, which they took good care to lose no time in doing. "Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time. The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom was paid unto them. Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that

this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the king? Now, when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power," Ezra iv. 17—23. This was a dark dispensation, but it soon passed; that king was slain, and Darius (Hystaspes) his successor, in the second year of his reign, allowed the building to proceed, and that apparently the more readily because his predecessor, the usurper, had been an enemy to the Church.

The prophets Zechariah and Haggai, by the spirit of God, stirred up Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the people, to build before Darius' new decree came out, Ezra v. 1, 2. It was extremely desirable to get the co-operation of the government, but it was their own duty to do what they themselves could to build the house of God. God countenanced their prayers and efforts by turning the heart of Darius to make a new decree still more favourable to the Church than the decree of Cyrus. In it Darius, after referring to the previous act of Cyrus, proceeded to forbid the enemies to hinder the building of the temple. "Now, therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place," Ezra vi. 6, 7. He then enacted the remarkable provision for the expenses of the erection, and the endowment of the temple worship—that the expenses of the building should be paid to the elders of the Jews out of that part of the king's tribute which was levied from the Samaritans, and that the means of offering up the daily sacrifices should be regularly given by the Samaritan governors to the priests at Jerusalem. "Moreover, I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail," Ezra vi. 8, 9. The declared end of this extraordinary liberality to the temple was, that in it they "may offer sacrifice of sweet savour to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his sons." The decree proceeds to enact pains and penalties for the civil offences or crimes of hindering by force the building of the temple, or refusing to pay the taxes levied by authority of the empire for its support. "Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this," Ezra vi. 11. And the decree concludes, by solemnly asserting the high prerogative of the house of God, and appealing to himself to execute his own judgments upon all its enemies. "And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree: let it be done with speed," Ezra vi. 12.

After a long reign, this Darius died, and was succeeded by his son Xerxes, who showed similar favour to the Church. The grandson of Darius, and son of Xerxes, is he who is called Artaxerxes by Ezra (vii.), and Ahasuerus in the book of Esther, and he is the *third* Persian king whom God made an eminent instrument of good to the Church. In his reign Satan laid a plot not merely to withdraw the aid of the State from the Church, but even to root up every vestige of the Church from the face of the earth. Haman, a descendant of Amalek, that early and worst enemy of the Church, became the king's chief favourite and prime minister, and cunningly contrived to get a decree passed under the great seal, commanding the whole civil and military force of the empire to lead the people, on a set day, to the utter destruction of all the Jews. The doom of the Church seemed sealed and final. The laws of the Medes and Persians could not be altered. The Church was completely in the power of the Persian empire, and that empire was under an unchangeable decree utterly to destroy every Jew that breathed. But God appeared for his Church at the darkest hour, and delivered them, and by whom? In answer to their prayers and fastings, he enabled a poor

orphan young woman, Esther, whom he had in his providence raised to be the Queen of Persia, to defeat the designs of Haman; and in her uncle Mordecai being thereupon made prime minister in his stead, the Church was not merely preserved, but strengthened, honoured, enlarged, and reformed.

It was this Artaxerxes, husband of Esther, that sent first Ezra, and some years afterwards Nehemiah, unto Jerusalem. In the chapter of our text we see what the State of Persia, by the advice of Esther and Ezra, did for the National Church of Judea for the established worship of God: vii. 6, "This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him." Verses 11, 12, 13, and 14, "Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel. Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand." Besides sending a royal commission of inquiry, Artaxerxes gave large Voluntary contributions to the church; v. 15, "And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem." And we read, that not only did the king and his counsellors freely offer silver and gold unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, but there was permission given to take up a Voluntary collection in all the province of Babylon, to be expended on the worship of God according to the discretion of Ezra and his brethren; that is, there were Voluntary contributions from the rulers and people given to the Church, to be laid out as the authorities in the Church might deem best. But Artaxerxes did more than exercise in his own person, and encourage in others Voluntary liberality towards the Church, he offered whatever money more might be needed out of the king's treasure house; and, in order that no inconvenience might be sustained through the distance between the treasury and Judea, and the consequent delay in transmitting money, he commanded his treasurers beyond the river, in the close neighbourhood of Judea, and from the taxes collected from the Samaritans and others, to give more as should be needed unto an hundred talents of silver, *i. e.* L.34,000, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. Thus we see, that individuals from their own funds, and the nation from the taxes, gave for the temple; the king himself, the seven members of his privy council, (giving us the idea of a Church or Missionary Association in the cabinet,) the inhabitants of the province of Babylon, the Jewish people and the priests gave Voluntarily as individuals; and, in addition to this, there was a general and unlimited order given by the king upon the national treasury, and a particular order upon the treasurers of the taxes paid by the Samaritans and other neighbouring tribes, for L.34,000, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt as much as might be asked. And, besides this private and public allotment of money, there was a still more important service done by the Persian government for the Church, perfect liberty being given to the Church to do whatever God required, the government not presuming to dictate any thing to the Church in point of faith, worship, or discipline, but leaving all to be regulated by the word of God. Verse 23, "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?" The ministers of the true religion were exempted from civil taxation, verse 24: "Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them." Commission also was given to Ezra to purify the magistracy of Judea, and the other provinces beyond the river, and to appoint magistrates with scriptural qualifications, religious men, verse 25: "And thou Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them

not." And, in addition to all this, the Persian government adopted the law of God as of equal authority with the law of the king, and appointed judgment to be executed speedily upon whomsoever would not do the law of God and the law of the king, verse 26. This was, of all the laws that the State of Persia had yet enacted in favour of the Church, the most full and complete. All that the civil authority could do for the temple, was done by this decree. And when, some years afterwards, the king's letters to Nehemiah commanded the governors beyond the river to aid him, as governor of Judea, in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, there seems little more that could have been rightly asked from the Persian State that was not given for the national establishment and support of the Church of God in Judea. Immediately after recording this great civil charter of the Church, Ezra writes the words of our text, " Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes; and I was strengthened, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me."

Having seen the providential dealings of God, and the transactions of the Persian government, which occasioned the thanksgiving in our text, and which explain its meaning, let us now consider what inferences we may justly draw from it.

1st. The decree of Artaxerxes was right in the judgment of God, as well as in the judgment of the Church.

It might be deemed a needless waste of time and trouble to prove this, were it not that, within a few years back, a great outcry has been raised against all positive countenance and support of the Church of God by the money or laws of nations and their civil governments. What stronger proof could be asked that it was right for the government of the Persian empire to give money and to make laws in favour of the Church, than that Ezra, in our text, gives thanks to God for this decree, and ascribes the procuring of it to the immediate hand of God? This Ezra was one of the most eminent persons in the whole ancient Church—was specially raised up for the work of reforming and re-establishing the worship of God at Jerusalem—performed for the Church, at its return from Babylon, what Moses did for the Church at its coming out of Egypt—and, with the help of Nehemiah, put the whole Church into that visible order which it had until Christ came. He arranged the canon, and put almost the last additions to the Old Testament scriptures. He, of all men, was most competent to form a correct judgment whether it was right in the government Persia to give so much money and countenance to the Church, and whether this aid of the temporal power was for the real good of the Church; and he, after recording the decree, breaks out into the expression of joy and thankfulness in our text, " Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem!" And what Ezra here gives thanks for drew forth a similar ascription of praise and thanksgiving from the whole Church in Judea on a former occasion; for they held a great public thanksgiving on account of the decree of Darius, chap. vi. 22: " And the children of Israel which were come again out of captivity kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy; for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." And the words of our text are not the words of Ezra alone, nor contain merely his fallible opinion: that holy man spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. It is God himself that here expresses his high approbation of the decree of the Persian king; and who will dare to say that the king did wrong, or that the Lord approved what was wrong, or what was unjust, or what was an infringement of true liberty of conscience? He that will contend with God, let him answer it. It was God that put it into the king's heart; it was God that put it into this heathen king's heart, to lay out a portion of the private and public treasure, which would otherwise have been spent on what would perish in the using, upon beautifying the house, and promoting the worship, and establishing the visible kingdom of God. It was God that put it into the king's heart to employ so faithful a servant of God as Ezra—to authorize him to purify the magistracy of the land, so that all magistrates in Judea would be at least outwardly religious men—to permit him to purify the ministry and the Church according to the

law of Moses, and to appoint that all in Judea who would not do the law of God should be punished even by temporal punishments. God put all this in the king's heart, and God approved it after the king had done it; and therefore it was all right and godly, for the good of men and the glory of God.

Not only was this decree right, but so important was it in the sight of God, that, like Cyrus's proclamation, it was the subject of propheey. Isaiah foretold Cyrus; and to Daniel was pre-intimation given of this decree of Artaxerxes. About 100 years before this deeree, and two years before Cyrus overcame Babylon, Daniel, understanding that the 70 years of captivity were nearly completed, made his remarkable fast and confession, recorded in his 9th chapter; and, in answer to his prayers, Gabriel was sent to inform him that 70 weeks were appointed until the coming of Messiah; and when we compute these 70 weeks of years, we find that they began, not from the decree of Cyrus, but from this better decree of Artaxerxes, which almost put the whole treasury and power of the Persian empire at the serviee of the Church. According to the best chronologists, the decree of our chapter is "the commandment" spoken of in that most remarkable of prophecies, in Daniel ix. 24, 25: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and propheey, and to anoint the most holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of *the commandment* to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prinee shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." But if this deeree of Artaxerxes was right, it follows as a corollary from this, and a

2d inferenee from our text, that it is of great importance to obtain the countenanee and aid of the civil power in favour of the visible church in all ages. It is true, God can preserve and increase his Church without the aid, and in spite of the opposition, of kings and rulers. The Church multiplied amidst the exterminating persecution in Egypt; and it was not lost during the 70 years of captivity in Babylon; and for 300 years after Christ, the Church was generally persecuted by the civil powers, and yet multiplied exceedingly. But still, opposition by the civil powers, and, much more, persecution, is in itself an evil; and the nursing care of the kings of the earth is a great blessing to the Church. Moses was sent to deliver the Church from Pharoah's perseeution, and bring it unto a land flowing with milk and honey, where it would dwell under the shadow of a protecting and aiding civil government; Cyrus was raised up to deliver the Church from Babylon, and give it his royal countenance and assistance; and when the first Christian Emperor was raised up, the whole Church rejoiced, and thanked God; and many think that he is foretold under the emblem of the rider on the white horse, in the first seal of the book of Revelations. What destroyed the Church in the ten tribes, but the civil power supporting idolatry, and discountenancing the Church? What maintained the Church in Judah, but, under God, the good kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah? The rulers of Israel were against, those of Judah were generally on the side of the Church. "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints," Hosea xi. 12. If prophets could have maintained a Church, that of the ten tribes would not have fallen, for there were no two such prophets in succession in Judah as Elijah and Elisha were in Israel; but wicked rulers, discountenancing true and countenancing false religion, ruined Church and State. "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." And if God had not turned the heart of the Persian kings to favour the Church, and, as it were, to nurse it in the silver bosom of the great image of the civil power, we see no way of preserving it then from being lost and swallowed up among the nations. And, to come to modern times, in those nations of Europe where the civil power favoured the Reformation from Popery, it has remained until this day, as in Scotland, England, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, and parts of Switzerland; but where the civil governments opposed it, Popery and Infidelity reign triumphant unto this hour, as in Spain, Italy, and France, in all which places as pure Protestant congregations were once planted as in any land; but, for want of civil protection and nursing, they perished.

Let none of you, therefore, my friends,

give heed to the foolish, false, and ruinous speculations of those who would have the Church renounce all aid from the State: experience and the Bible are equally against them. The Nonconformists or Presbyterians of England were once double the number of those in Scotland; 2000 ministers in one day were cast out by that bloody and perjured tyrant, Charles II. The State has hardly given them countenance since, and now they have dwindled away to a wretched handful, and the most of their congregations have become deniers of the Godhead of Jesus Christ; while the 1000 congregations of Presbyterians in Scotland, after a more terrible persecution than almost any church ever suffered, having been countenanced by the State for 150 years, are to this day orthodox in doctrine; a revival has commenced among them by the Spirit of God, which promises to bless the whole land. And while the great majority of the descendants of those who seceded from them have abandoned their sworn confession of faith, and are going farther and farther from the principles of their fathers, the Established Church is repenting and remembering whence she has fallen, and beginning in earnest to do her first works.

3d. If civil aid and countenance be so important to the Church, it is the duty of all that love the prosperity of Jerusalem to seek and endeavour to obtain it. Ezra did so, vii. 6, "And the king granted him all his request according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him." And in like manner, Nehemiah, after he had mourned certain days for the desolations of Jerusalem, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and offered up many confessions and requests, concluded his intercessory prayer by entreating God to grant him favour in the sight of the Persian king. "Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." It is very true that there has been much in the history of the Church of Scotland to discourage her friends from seeking the aid of the State. Our kings have too seldom been nursing fathers of our Church. For many years the civil power of Scotland was too much in the hands of those who cared little for the Church. The middle classes had little or no influence in the election of their representatives in Parliament. Every thing was managed by the higher classes, of whom a great majority are attached to the superstitious and imperfectly reformed Church of England, and many cared not for religion except as a mean of keeping the people in quietness. So little did they care for the Church, that at the union with England, they procured a law forbidding the erection of a new parish, unless two-thirds of the valued rent consented to it; that is, the landholders prevented any more, even of her own money, being given to enlarge the Church as the population increased; and there was scarce a new parish church erected for a hundred years. And together with this, they prevailed, by means of patronage, to put in a corrupt ministry, who pleased and fawned upon the great, whilst they neglected their congregations, and the doctrines and discipline of the Church became thus miserably corrupted. From all this have grown the evils we now see—a large population almost heathens in our principal towns, great bodies of Dissenters and Papists, and the churches not near able to contain all the people, although in some places it is said that they are not filled, and an increasing enmity against the national Church, and threatening to take away all her endowments and leave her a beggar dependent upon the charity of her remaining friends. The refusal to increase the number of churches, patronage, and the corrupt ministry introduced by patronage, have occasioned chiefly the present evils of Scotland and her Church. But now that patronage is checked, and may, by the voice of the people be removed—now that there is a great begun improvement in the ministry—now that efforts are making to increase the Church, as well as to reform it; and now that the middle classes of Scotland, who have always been the steadfast and tried friends of the Church, have a real and effective voice in the management of the nation, through their representatives in Parliament, it is their bounden duty to take care of the Church of their fathers, not to starve it as did the heritors and nobles in their time of power; to call upon Parliament to increase and endow new parishes where needed, and to use what means God has put in your hands for the extension, defence, and reformation of the Church. Be well assured that it is only a people that love and pray, and strive for the peace of Jerusalem, that shall prosper temporally or spiritually. The curse of God will rest upon Scotland if his church therein, once so glorious and

pure, be allowed to lie waste and to be destroyed. The late change in the civil government of this kingdom, has put it into the power of the middle classes either to build or to destroy the national Church; the nobles would not build it, and their power is now curtailed; if the people do not, what is to be looked for but the most desolating judgments to come upon us by the destruction of all institutions of civil order and religion, and every man turned against his brother. Without church reform civil reform will but hasten the out-pouring of the judgments which national and individual sins have so long and so fully merited.

4thly. We ought not to be discouraged from seeking the adequate support of the state, by the apparent improbability of obtaining it. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" said the prophet Zechariah, in reference to the opposition of the usurping Persian king, stirred up by the enemies of the church, "before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Zech. iv. 6, 7. If it be the duty of kings to be nursing fathers of the Church, and to serve the King of kings, and to provide that all their subjects have the means of knowing and worshipping God, and that "to the poor the Gospel be preached," and that none perish for lack of the means of knowledge, then it is the sacred and bounden duty of all Christians not only to pray for this, but to strive and use their influence to bring it about; and one principal way of moving government now, is by the petitions of the people. Therefore it is a duty to petition for the aid of the government to the Church, and whoso refuses this duty does not perform the part of a friend to the Church, and neglects a duty to God. Be not concerned about the immediate effect of petitioning; leave consequences to God; do your duty, and God will take care of his own cause; only do your duty.

5thly. The friends of religion and the Church ought not to be unduly concerned which party is up or which is down. Too engrossing concern about party is a chief sin of the day. Know that God moves all parties to fulfil his predeterminate purposes, and turns their hearts as the rivers of waters whithersoever he pleases. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." And know, that unless he turn their hearts aright, all parties will equally oppose the house and church of God. Remember what surprising revolutions and turns of affairs took place in Persia, and how God caused them all, in answer to the prayers of his people, to work together for the benefit of his Church. It is for the Church that the earth itself is kept up: and much more is it for the sake of his Church that God raises up a Cyrus, a Darius, an Artaxerxes, and places such men as Daniel, Mordecai, and even Haman, in kings' courts. Do not trust much in man, or in parties of men. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh." When the friends of the Church are uppermost, give thanks, like Ezra, to God, who putteth it into the heart of the king to beautify his house. When the enemies are uppermost, do as David did, when he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

6thly. The friends of the Church ought not to be much moved either by the flatteries or the threats of the enemies. In the days of Cyrus—Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel; in the days of Darius—Tatnai, and Shethar-boznai; in the days of Artaxerxes—Sanballat, and Tobiah—all banded together against the Church. While the Jews were indolent, and did not build the temple, the enemies let them alone; but whenever there was a serious progress in building and reforming, immediately the enemies put every iron in the fire to stop them. Sometimes they tried flatteries, and feigned friendship and regard for religion: "Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice to him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither." Ezra iv. 2. Sometimes they tried falsehoods and calumnies, telling the Persian king that the Jews were a disloyal rebellious people that would pay no taxes. Ezra iv. 13. Sometimes they spoke with great calmness and moderation, as did Tatnai and Shethar-boznai. Ezra v. 3—17. Sometimes they ridiculed the efforts of the Church with the most bitter scorn and irony: "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burnt? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him; and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Neh. iv. 2, 3. And at other times they

conspired to arm and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder the building. Neh. iv. 8. And, in short, every possible device of snares, and treachery, and falsehood, and bribery, and intimidation, was tried, all without effect. Neh. vi. Sometimes they used open force. Ezra iv. 23. But although they occasionally prevailed for a while to humble the Jews, and make them see their only steadfast friend to be God, yet when the Jews turned to him in prayer, and fasting, and confession, and repentance, and reformation, they uniformly had a revival and deliverance, and all their enemies were confounded. And then, as now, there was a mixing up of the most different classes, animated by a common hatred and envy to the Church. There were Haman and bribed counsellors at court; and there were Arabians, Ammonites, Horonites, Samaritans, in the provinces, and of all the Samaritans were the bitterest. Their predecessors had seceded from the Church at Jerusalem, and now they had completely degenerated; professing themselves the people of God, they joined with the worst enemies of the Church for its destruction. And then, as well as now, insignificant sections of trifling sects and tribes tried to fill the ears of government by the most sounding descriptions of their own greatness and importance. In the petitions against the building and endowment of the Church, who would have discovered that the petitioners were nothing more than the petty fractions of mean tribes in an obscure corner of a distant province. And amidst the sounding names and designations of the numerous bands of petitioners who would have discovered that the petition itself was got up by one or two individuals: "Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river." But do what they could, the enemies were disappointed and shamed, so long as the Jews were penitent and humbled, and looked up for help to God, and sought to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, and put the Church into order. And God turned the heart of the king of Assyria to command the very taxes taken by him from the Samaritans to be paid by them day by day for the maintenance of the public worship at Jerusalem; and for this the Spirit of God gives thanks in Ezra vi. 22. So will the enemies of the Protestant national church in our land be put to shame in God's good time, however they may for a time prosper because of our sins.

7thly. The Church needs, and is entitled to the private liberality of individuals, as well as to the public support of nations. Let us not think that the whole burden of maintaining the public worship of God should be borne by the nation, and none borne by individuals—by ourselves. Large and liberal as were the government grants by Darius, Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, yet the voluntary liberality of the private Jews was called into exercise. So it was in the time of Moses and of the kings, and so it must be as it has been in the times of the Gospel. The Church requires both national and private liberality. Private Christians, as well as christian nations, are to bring their wealth into the new Jerusalem. There was no nation or government that befriended Christ himself when on earth. It was not, indeed, possible that there could; for had "the princes of this world known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Consequently he was obliged to depend chiefly on the liberality of private individuals for the maintenance of himself and his infant church. But Christ himself accepted of support from the property of Chuza, the steward of king Herod, what seems as near as was possible to accepting support from kings.

8thly. The church of God ought not to be treated either by individuals or nations in an avaricious, mean and niggardly manner. Artaxerxes had not to build the temple—that was done already—but he beautified it; he laid out money on it, as some would say very unnecessarily and extravagantly. But Ezra thanks God for putting such a thing as this into the king's heart to *beautify* the house of God. Do we beautify our own houses? do we paint and ceil them, and make them something more respectable than bare barns? do nations build palaces for their kings, and magnificent public buildings for their courts, and do they think this to be for the honour of the nation and of the king? And shall we pay no mark of respect to the King of kings? Shall

his house be no better than a barn? Shall we think every penny spent in beautifying it money needlessly thrown away? And because the Church of Scotland disregards ornaments, shall she therefore be deprived of absolute necessaries? Shall we build not one room more than is barely sufficient in the earthly palace of Christ, while the meanest country cottage boasts of a spare room for extraordinary occasions, and the poorest farmer or burgher would be ashamed if his house was so scrimp as to hold not one individual more than his own family? Who is so miserly as to wish to have no spare seat in his house for his friends, and not one more than will accommodate just so many of his family as must sit down at the same time? And who is so miserly to the Church as not to allow a spare seat for those who cannot attend on every Sabbath-day, and not one seat for friends and neighbours on extraordinary and sacramental occasions? The poor captives from Babylon consulted not their own poverty in rebuilding the temple; they thought of the glory of God, and laid the foundation of a worthy temple. Cyrus the Great nobly helped them out of the riches of Persia. They thought not of their fewness at the time, but built the walls of Jerusalem of a worthy size, becoming the dignity of the chief city of Judea; and they then brought inhabitants to fill the half empty city. Neh. vii. 4. "Now the city was large and great, but the people were few therein." Neh. xi. 1, 2. "And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem." How does the Word of God, and the conduct of his people of old, rebuke the meanness shown towards his Church in our land, and the niggardly fear, lest there be in the house of God any room more than there are already people pressing in to occupy completely. The noble spirit generously shown in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, was followed in the time of Malachi, by as complete a display of miserliness as can be made among ourselves, and we see what rebuke it called forth. Mal. i. 7, 8. "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."

9thly. As it is the duty of all to serve and glorify God, so no one is exempted from the duty of supporting his true Church. The heathen kings and heathen people of Persia gave of their money to the Church; and they did no more than it was their duty to do. The government gave of the public money taken by taxes from heathen to support the temple; and thanks is given to God for this. And Darius commanded the Samaritan governors, instead of sending the taxes to the public treasury, to give them at once to the Jews for the support of the public national worship of God; and for this the Holy Spirit renders thanks. Had not the Samaritans as good a right to plead conscience against paying the taxes to the temple, as any now can have against paying taxes to a government that supports what most of them allow to be the true worship of the only living and true God?

10thly. We ought not to refuse to add to the number of ministers and buildings in the Church, until the Church is perfectly reformed. The population of Scotland has more than doubled; and its wealth has increased at least fourfold since the present number of ministers and churches was first established. Is it not a fearful evil that so many hundred thousands of people should thus, in Scotland, have had no public provision made for their good, and that so many thousands of the poor should be perishing for lack of knowledge? But some say, and I confess I am almost one of them who do say, let us first remove the chief corruptions of the Church, the chief causes of its decay, and then set about rebuilding it. First remove the patient's disease, and then use means to strengthen him. But suppose we were to act upon this principle, when could we say that the Church is so far reformed that it is now time to enlarge her. There is no such thing as a perfect church or a perfect Christian upon earth. There will probably be some things that need reform while the Church is upon earth; shall we say that, until every minister preaches the Gospel without error, and every church member be faultless, and every sitting in every parish church in Scotland be filled, no new church ought to be built, however much it may in any particular district be needed; this is the same as to say the

Church is never to be enlarged. It is, indeed, most desirable to have that wall of Satan, patronage, removed utterly from surrounding the Church, and also most desirable to remove scandalous and inefficient ministers, and to cast out scandalous and ignorant members; but all these reforms are going on and will require time; and, in the meantime, are millions to be allowed to go to hell in ignorance, and sin, and misery? Let the reformation, and the defence, and the building of the Church all go on together. Nehemiah's workmen builded with one hand, and with the other held a sword to defend themselves from their enemies. And after having built the temple and the walls, and driven away the enemies, Nehemiah then set the people to confess publicly their sins; to renew their national covenant; to purge the communion roll of unworthy members; to purify the priesthood, and drive out unworthy ministers, and to promote the sanctification of the Sabbath. Neh. vii.—xiii. This Bible order is the order now following in the church of Scotland. May the Lord prosper it and bring us to deep repentance, for great indeed is the guilt that lies upon us and our fathers.

11thly. The aid of government to the extension of the Church, is the rich giving for the good of the poor.

The rich treasure house of Persia would not feel the subtractions given to the temple at Jerusalem; one battle would waste far more. And to the poor returned captives of Judah what an assistance and blessing government grants were! What the government would not feel, it would utterly have ruined the poor returned captives to have expended from their own resources. We plead for a small sum from the abundance of the nation, to give religious instruction to the poor. We, parish ministers, ask not one shilling to ourselves, it is for you; it is for the poor labourers, and weavers, and mechanics, especially of the large towns; it is for your children's education—for their and your souls that we plead; and we wish to take little or nothing from the wages of the poor, we wish to get from the abundance of the rich, many of whom *voluntarily will not* part with a farthing for the souls or bodies of their poorer brethren. We plead the cause of the poor against the rich, and the part of the rich against themselves. And it has been asserted, not without good grounds, that one halfpenny a-year upon every individual in the empire, would be the utmost extent of the burden imposed upon the nation by granting the petitions for the Church of Scotland.

12thly. Let us not think that we shall grow poor if we give much to God. How will the heathen kings of Persia rise up in judgment against the professed Protestant kings of Scotland, and condemn them, for they gave to the temple at Jerusalem, and behold a greater than the temple of Jerusalem is here? The christian church as much excelleth the Jewish, as the light of the moon excels that of the stars. Did the Persian kings lose by what they gave to the temple? A visible success seems to have attended those kings that gave most to the temple, and those who opposed the Church were visibly disgraced, and weakened, and defeated. Have the heritors of Scotland been enriched by their spoiling and keeping her own from the Church? It has been said, with much plausibility, that as a body they are the poorest and most drowned in debt of the whole community. "They that honour me, I will honour." Who ever gave to God and did not receive a full repayment with principal and interest? Since this nation began to give nothing for the enlargement of the Church, and to suffer it to become corrupt, the nation has gradually sunk deeper and deeper into debt, while the people of the nation are increasing in wealth. That branch of the royal family, the Stuarts, which set itself against the Church of Scotland, and shed the blood of the saints like water, has been cast from the throne, and became beggars, and died all of them in a strange land. So dangerous it is to meddle with the house of God. Haman felt this to his cost. At the beginning of the reign of Darius, after the enemies had prevailed for a while to stop the building of the temple under the former reign, the people of Jerusalem were saying, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. "Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mount-

tain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit." "Consider now from this day and upward, from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it. From this day will I bless you, saith the Lord." Haggai, i. ii.

ODE TO DUTY.

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who art a Light to guide, a Rod
To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
From strife and from despair; a glorious ministry.

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth:
Glad hearts! without reproach or blot;
Who do thy work, and know it not:
May joy be theirs while life shall last!
And thou, if they should totter, teach them to stand fast!

Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security.
And blessed are they who in the main
This faith, even now, do entertain:
Live in the spirit of this creed;
Yet find that other strength, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried;
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust:
Resolved that nothing e'er should press
Upon my present happiness,
I shoved unwelcome tasks away;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control;
But in the quietness of thought:
Me this uncharter'd freedom tries;
I feel the weight of chance desires:
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose which ever is the same.

Yet not the less would I throughout
Still act according to the voice
Of my own wish; and feel past doubt
That my submissiveness was choice:
Not seeking in the school of pride
For "precepts over dignified,"
Denial and restraint I prize
No farther than they breed a second Will more wise.

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we any thing so fair
As is the smile upon thy face;
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;
And Fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong;
And the most ancient Heavens through Thee are fresh and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee; I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh! let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice:
The confidence of reason give:
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live!

Wordsworth.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ARCHIBALD NISBET, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS SWAN, Birmingham.

PREPARATION FOR HOLY AND HAPPY DYING;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ARCHIBALD NISBET.

"*There is but a step between me and death.*"—1 SAM. xx. 3.

DILIGENT preparation for his latter end is not only the bounden duty, but the paramount interest of every man. The motives accordingly which are best calculated to promote this highly important purpose, are no less various in number than they are urgent in their nature. To the most superficial reflection these will be evident. The amazing changes which that event must make upon the condition of every individual, along with the numberless consequences which, as yet unseen, are to follow in its train, present in the most striking aspect the necessity of circumspection in this awfully solemn affair; and, with a voice no less intelligible than it is impressive, entreat from every one a serious attention to the things of their everlasting peace. There is another ground, however, upon which the realities of a coming eternity possess a high claim upon the regard of dying man. We mean the fragility of his present existence. For, surely, when it is considered how soon he shall be separated from time, and time be separated from him, how short is the distance between this world and that which is beyond it, and how narrow is the veil that divides the visible from the invisible state, nothing can be more foolish than a godless neglect of the future, or more infatuated than an inordinate attachment to the present. Upon this topic, accordingly, Scripture frequently expatiates at great length, and at the same time in language of the most beautiful nature. There, the perishing life of man is compared at one time to the fair flower that blooms gay in the morning, but withers again at noon; at another time, to the airy vapour of the atmosphere, which appears for a moment, but then speedily vanishes away. At one time, the same existence is compared to the wind of heaven, which now careers along the firmament, but in a little is gone for ever; at another time, to the evanescent shadow which is once seen, but in the twinkling of an eye is seen no more. The same idea is strikingly exhibited in the words of the text. It is true, indeed, that the circumstances in which they were spoken were somewhat singular and extraordinary. Harassed by the malignity, and persecuted by the animosity of the blood-thirsty Saul, David was at the time exposed to no small danger; and, considering the manifold advantages which his enemy possessed over him, might look upon himself as daily encompassed with the utmost peril. But though this be the case, the language is by no means inappropriate to the condition of every man.

So inevitable is death, so short is life, so uncertain is the period when the one may approach and the other terminate, that, when reflecting upon the present and anticipating the future, each man may say, in the solemn and momentous language of the text, "There is but a step between me and death." In discoursing from these words, it shall be our endeavour, humbly depending upon divine aid, in the first place to demonstrate, by a few considerations, the important truth contained in the text. In the second place, advert to the duty which that truth urges upon every man; and, in the third place, conclude by noticing a few of the motives which may be considered as calculated to induce attention to the duty.

According to this method, we are then, in the first place, to demonstrate, by a few considerations, the important truth contained in the text. Upon this part of the subject we would observe, first, that every man may apply the language of the text to his own condition, when it is considered that death is the inevitable destiny of all our race. This humiliating event none can escape. From the very condition in which man has placed himself, his body is doomed to dissolution, and thus, despite of every contingency, must at last undergo the fatal sentence. Nor does it matter what rank he occupy among his fellow-men. To the sway of this desolating tyrant the mightiest emperor who ever sat on earthly throne, no less than the lowliest beggar who ever craved the boon of charity, is entirely subjected; and thus it is, that from the palace of the prince, no less than from the cottage of the poor, may ever-and-anon be heard the cry of exhausted and departing nature. Moreover, in its descent upon man, this evil is regulated by no particular law. Death meets him everywhere, and is procured by every instrument. It may come by violence or secret influence. It may come by the aspect of a star or the smoke of a mist, by the emission of a cloud or the meeting of a vapour, by the stumbling of a chariot or the fall of a stone. In short, it may come by severity or by degrees, by God's mercy or God's anger, by every thing in providence and every thing in manners, by every thing in nature and every thing in chance. Such are the circumstances in which we are placed. The chains which confine us to this condition are strong as destiny, and immutable as the eternal laws of God. The original condition of our race was very different. Created in the image of his Maker, man was invested with the fair beauties of immortality, and destined to live for ever; but, transgressing the commandment, he exposed himself to the displeasure of his Maker, and thus, as the certain consequence of sin, entailed upon himself, nay, upon all his posterity, suffering and death. Creation mourned the melancholy fall, and a cloud of darkness rested upon the nations. From that moment, accordingly, in the long vista of succeeding ages might be seen unnumbered diseases ready to draw forth the rending sigh and the heavy groan. From that moment might be seen millions of weary mourners moving in sad procession, and weeping as they went. From that moment might be seen the dreary chambers of the charnel-house; and, though decked in monumental glory, the sad memorials of our fall. From that moment might be seen murder in crimson covering stalking along, slaughter marching in widely desolating step, and, on the theatre of human passion, a thousand garments dyed in blood, a thousand voices sunk in silence, a thousand arms laid low, and death in bitter triumph reigning over all. Thus, independently of every circumstance, death is the inevitable destiny of our race; and all experience proves that from this warfare there is no discharge. It is true, indeed, that to this general law there has been found exception; and the records of divine revelation contain instances of two individuals who, being translated at once to heaven, tasted not the bitterness of death. To the exclusion of these two cases, however, which are handed down as an especial testimony to the truth of an eternal life beyond the power of death, every thing around us says that man must die. He may escape the lingering agonies which generally accompany dissolution, and at one fell sweep pass from time unto eternity. He may enjoy many years of healthful vigour, and see fall around him the companions of his youthful days. But whatever be the case, at last cometh the night of death; and then wrapped in the sombre pall of the tomb, he, like his fathers before him, lies down to sleep in the silence of the dust: so that upon a slight review of such a consideration, every man may well declare, "There is but a step between me and death."

Again, upon this part of the subject we would remark, that every man may apply the language of the text to his own condition, not only when it is considered that

death is the inevitable destiny of all our race, but also when it is considered that even at best human life is of a most limited duration. Were man so constituted that he might expect to spend in this world a lengthened number of years, to sojourn upon the footstool of our earth for a term of many seasons, and rejoice over the bounties of providence for what might be termed a multitude of days, some excuse might be found for his violent attachment to the present, and his unhallowed neglect of the future. But what, alas! is the real state of the case? So short is the life of man, that he is nothing more than a pilgrim in a strange land. And here we speak not of those who, at the command of God, have dropped into an early tomb, and in the spring-day of life have taken a long farewell of beloved relatives. We speak not of the tender infant snatched away in the bloom of days, and over whose remembrance many a tear has fallen from the eye of bereaved affection. We speak not of the ardent youth, whose early prospects have been all blasted by the whirlwind of death, and whose long-cherished anticipations lie entombed with him in the dust. Nor do we speak of those who have been cut off in the vigour of life, and left behind them many an unsatisfied hope. But we allude even to those who have been blessed with what is generally termed a long life, and who, after bearing the heat of the day, have been brought to what may be called the evening of human existence. What, it may be asked, is the period of their life? They can look back, indeed, and from the summit upon which they stand can behold many a variety of scene. But they can also look forward; and, as they see the ceaseless roll of eternal ages that lies before them, will be constrained to acknowledge, so striking is the contrast, that their days are but vanity. Nay, brethren, were the life of man extended to a thousand years, the same truth would still hold. Time, whatever be its duration, is really short. Eternity only is long; and thus it is that the very rising and setting of yonder sun, the very succession of spring to winter, of winter to autumn, of autumn to summer, and of summer to spring, might have told the most aged antediluvians that life was but a shadow. What shall we say, then, of the short period now allotted to man? Alas! it is nought, and may well be compared to what is frail and fleeting. Have you seen the falling of a star? Have you seen the flight of an eagle? Have you seen the verdant face of spring? Have you seen the fresh dew of the morning? Have you seen the wind that chafes the flood? So is man!

> The winds blow out, the bubble dies,
> And spring entombed in autumn lies;
> The dew dries up, the star is shot,
> The flight is past, and man forgot.

But, farther, upon this part of the subject we would observe, that every man may apply the language of the text to his own condition, when it is considered not only that death is the inevitable destiny of all our race, not only that even at best human life is of a most limited duration, but also when it is considered that time is in every circumstance of a most uncertain tenure. Nothing, indeed, can more strikingly confirm the words before us than this momentous fact; for, though all men know that they will die, nay, though all men know that they will die soon, yet, respecting either the moment or the manner of their death, they are entirely ignorant: and whether they shall be carried away in the morning, noonday, or evening; whether they shall be summoned from the stage of time in sudden surprise, lingering sickness, or protracted agony, they absolutely know nothing. On this ground, the period of man's life may be considered as short indeed. And is this true only with regard to such as, from the circumstances in which they are placed, are peculiarly exposed to danger? Is this true only with regard to him who, travelling in the inhospitable desert, may fall a victim to ravenous beasts of prey; with regard to him who, going down to sea in ships, must brave a while the desolating tempest; with regard to him who, standing on the field of bloody contest, can eye around him the unnumbered engines of death? No; it is true of all men. An appointed time is guaranteed to none, and thus dissolution may descend as speedily upon him who sleeps in security as upon him who is cradled aloft in the couch of danger. No truth, however connected with this important topic, is so readily forgotten, and so unworthily supplanted by the cares of a world that perishes. The mind of man devises many a scheme, and the heart of man cherishes many a fond prospect. In the midst of all this, however, the voice of heaven's fiat is heard, and then these schemes are all blasted, and these prospects laid low in the dust. Around us we behold many a testimony to this truth. Walk into the dwellings of the dead, and behold the green

sod that covers yonder grave. There reposes in lonely silence a striking monument of what we are now saying. Like his companions left behind him, that impetuous youth had pictured out with fancy's pencil many a coming scene, rejoiced in hopeful anticipation, and waited for the approach of future felicity. In a moment death began to prey upon his vitals, and, before a few moons had waned, made him a tenant of the corrupting tomb. Behold that grave nigh unto it. He who slumbers there was the delight of his friends, the ornament of society, the stay of his family. Light beamed in his eye, and vigour rested in his arm. In a moment, by an unseen hand, desolation came upon him, and left friends to lament, society to mourn, and a family to weep. Nor can the eye pass over that other grave nigh unto these. There lie the remains of one who was beautiful and lovely, amiable and affectionate. In her a husband delighted, children rejoiced, and many were happy. With one fell stroke the destroyer came, and laid in the dust the subject of unnumbered tears and heavy sorrows. Such is the lot of vain man. And who knows but the same destiny may be at hand to many who are now addressed; and that little though they think it, there are even at this moment sown within their frames the seeds of a disease that will in a little blast all their hopes, and crush to nought their fondest anticipations. Yes, that cord which binds together matter and spirit is inexpressibly slender, and may in a moment be snapped asunder; that bowl whence life draws her nourishing draughts is inexpressibly brittle, and in a moment may be dashed to pieces; that wheel which turns round the whole animal economy is inexpressibly minute, and in a moment may be crushed to very dust. Upon a review of this consideration, every man may say, "There is but a step between me and death." What ground of humility to man, and what an urgent call upon him to bury all his glory in the earth; what a ground of solemn reflection to every individual, and what a call upon him to improve the present! "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." That time will depart never to return; that day will set never to rise. "Oh! that men were wise, that they understood these things, that they would consider their latter end, and apply their hearts unto wisdom:"—which the scope leads us to what we proposed in

nd place, namely, to advert to the duty which the truth in the text urged upon every individual.

Upon this part of the subject, we would observe: first, that the announcement of such a solemn consideration should induce every man to seek immediate reconciliation with his Maker. By nature, all men are in a state of enmity with God, and on account of sin exposed to his grievous displeasure. At their entrance into the world, they bear the marks of divine condemnation upon them; and, so long as they continue therein unconverted to God, they are only adding to their original guilt and pollution. This truth, however unwelcome to the carnal mind, is written as with a sunbeam upon every page of divine revelation; and, therefore, to enter into any formal proof of it, were a task altogether unnecessary. Now, to die in such a state, were awful beyond expression. For most certain it is if men not only live in this world unconverted to God, but enter into that which is eternal with the inscription of divine wrath upon their foreheads, there will open upon them a scene of misery, unending as it shall be agonizing. To conceal this were most unfaithful, nay, were most cruel; and therefore, terrible though it may appear, we hesitate not to announce the dreadful fact. Against the impenitently wicked, God has uttered, for the vindication of his justice, the most awful denunciations; and, as he is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent, they can expect nothing else. In these circumstances, then, the endeavour of every man should be to have this barrier removed, and to look upon procrastination in the matter to be above all things most foolish and most infatuated. For as death is certain, and the period of it uncertain, the summons for eternity may come when not expected, and thus the slumbering conscience awake not till recovery is unattainable. And the neglect of men in this important concern is the more inexcusable, upon a review of the precious opportunities which they possess. To them are now offered in the Gospel a pardoning mercy, a sanctifying grace, an eternal life; and for the purpose of accomplishing their salvation, the Almighty in gracious wisdom hath appointed every necessary mean. On the ground of gratitude, then, no less than that of interest and duty, men are urgently called upon to return unto God. Yes, God is waiting for them; Christ is waiting for

them ; the Holy Spirit is waiting for them ; and, therefore, their neglect of this duty is not only an insult to the Almighty, but a contempt at the same time of his abundant and saving grace. Since, then, an eternal world is at hand, since deliverence from the consequences of sin may be obtained, not a moment is to be lost. On the contrary, let the united influences of these truths bring men unto God, and thus delivering them from that wrath which they deserve, make them meet for the solemn eternity which is before them.

Again, upon this part of the subject we would observe, that the announcement of such a solemn consideration should not only induce men to seek immediate reconciliation with their Maker, but at the same time should increase in the great work of the soul's salvation—the spiritual diligence of those who have been enabled to seek that reconciliation. To the enjoyment of eternal life after death, something more is necessary than the simple pardon of sin. This, indeed, is the first step, and before the soul can be prepared for death, deliverance from condemnation is absolutely necessary. After this, however, much remains to be done. The eternal well-being of the soul is a work of momentous magnitude, and will most assuredly require the attention of the longest life. Let us think for a moment what it is. Not only must we be justified by faith, but also sanctified by divine grace ; not only must we be delivered from the guilt, but also redeemed from the power of sin ; and thus having a meetness, as well as a title for the inheritance of the saints in light, be fully prepared to stand in the presence of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Is this a work to be done at once ? Surely not. Without speaking of that divine grace from on high which is the spring of all spiritual life, there are required frequent meditation, fervent prayer, diligent hearing, serious reading. This must be evident to every one. For, surely, if we do not often reflect upon our spiritual character, how can we know our condition God-ward ? If we do not continue earnest in prayer, how can we obtain the blessing of the Most High? If we do not attend to the assidnous hearing, as well as reading of the divine Word, how can we make any progress towards that perfection which is heaven itself? It is impossible ; and thus many who conceived themselves to be on the path of well-being have, in the neglect of these, been at last miserably disappointed. Oh! then, it is high time for every one, instead of relaxing, to increase his diligence in this great work of spiritual self-examination. The day will depart, and be succeeded by the setting of night. The season of grace will flee away, and be followed by an evening, the shadows of which can never be dispelled. Shall we then continue ever listless ? We labour for the meat that perisheth, and spend in toil unnumbered hours for that which must soon depart, and are so foolish as to neglect what concerns a dread eternity. Let this be the case with none of us. Then, as we know not how soon these privileges may be out of our reach, let us be diligent in business ; let us be fervent in spirit ; let us add to our faith every christian grace ; let us be constantly engaged in the service of God, and animated by the hope set before us ; let us run with patience our appointed race. In this way, and in this way alone, our life will be useful ; our death will be happy ; our eternity will be joyful.

Still farther upon this part of the subject we would remark, that the announcement of such a solemn consideration should not only induce men to seek immediate reconciliation with their Maker, should not only increase in the great work of the soul's salvation the diligence of those who have already obtained that reconciliation, but should also make every one stand in the attitude of constant and watchful preparation for eternity. Considering the many changes which death must make upon the condition of every individual, it is certainly the most important event which can take place during the whole course of his existence, and consequently requires a suitable frame of mind to meet it. In this respect, however, all are chargeable with a most unpardonable insensibility. We do not wonder so much to behold this in men whose hearts are devoted to the world, and who have no care of any thing beyond it. But we do wonder to see the spirit so strikingly prevalent among those who, from their profession, should not only be desiring, but devoutly anticipating a coming eternity. Nevertheless we apprehend this to be the character maintained by the generality of professing Christians, we may not accuse such of inattention to the ordinary duties of life ; we may not accuse such of indifference even to the observance of religion ; but we would ask them if they, according to the divine injunction, have their "loins girt about, and

their lamps burning?"—in other words, are they living in the exercise of every christian grace, increasing their faith, cherishing their hope, and nurturing their love, and thus waiting for the coming of their Lord? We say such are not. Look at many in the house of God, and where is the hearing and diligent ear? Look at them in the sphere of public society, and where is the tender conscience, the upright walk? Look at them in the privacy of domestic retirement, and where is the humble deportment, the holy conversation, the heavenly charm of attractive example? Look at them in the solitary chamber, and where is the contrite confession, the ardent supplication, the spiritual longing after intimate communion with the blessed God? Alas! these are seldom to be found!—poor preparation for a coming eternity! We hope better things of many whom we now address, and would now urge upon them more regular examination of their spiritual state, more fervent diligence in the service of their Maker, more ardent aspirations after him in glory. For, oh! how foolish is a contrary conduct. You are dying creatures, and should, therefore, allow no dawn to arise, and no day to set, without serious reflection upon this important event. You are in a little to enter eternity, and should, therefore, make it the object of your heart to be meet for such a change. You are soon to be for ever happy or for ever miserable, and should, therefore, in meditating upon the affecting truth contained in the text—should ever be ready to pray with the Psalmist, "Lord, make me to know mine end and the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am"

And this leads us in the last place to conclude this discourse, by noticing a few of the motives calculated to induce attention to the duty demanded. In the first place, then, speedy attention ought to be given to the momentous topic of the soul's salvation, as life alone is the season of duty. "Now is the accepted time," is a truth no less clearly taught by reason, than it is by the urgent entreaties of divine revelation. The man who does not sow in spring can never reap his fruit in autumn. In like manner, it is incontestibly evident that he who does not seek the favour of God here, can never expect to enjoy that favour hereafter. This is a matter of deepest importance. Are we now possessed of health; are we now favoured with the bounties of providence; are we now blessed with the privileges of the everlasting Gospel, then are we under the deepest obligation to improve them. Nay, more than this. In the observance of what is now stated our highest interests are involved. Let the night of death approach, and every opportunity of a spiritual nature has for ever departed. After that no sound of invitation will ever be heard; after that no offer of pardon will ever be given. A sentence passes and is never recalled; and, therefore, if that period fleet away unimproved, there can be no reconciliation, and no return unto God, but a fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation. Let precious time be improved and all will be well. But, again, speedy attention ought to be given to the momentous topic of the soul's salvation, as this will be highly calculated to make the hour of death comfortable. In whatever light it may be viewed, death is a step awfully momentous. We accordingly find the generality of men upon its approach perplexed in a degree somewhat striking, and even labouring under no small degree of alarm. Few, indeed, attain that full assurance which can dispel every fear. On the contrary, there is too frequently even in the best of men, if not an absence of that comfort which they require, at least nothing more than a humble trust in his mercy through a Mediator, while with the greater part of dying men there is a trepidation, a dismay by no means becoming their faith. Now what is the reason of this? It arises from that indolence in spiritual things, that listlessness in the work of salvation which characterizes too many. Oh! were men living as they ought to do, death would be invested with comparatively little terror. Let us, then, be found walking more closely with God, waiting more intently upon his Spirit, and desiring more earnestly the blessings of his grace; and then, when he does approach, the destroying tyrant will be divested of many of those terrors with which he is generally accompanied. Nay, on the contrary, beyond that dark valley which is so dreary to many, we shall behold a land of unclouded light; and across those awful waves which are so overwhelming to thousands, we shall behold a country beaming in the glory of eternal bliss, and thus be able, instead of feeling at his approach agitation and alarm, to welcome death as our best and expected friend.

Once more we would observe, that speedy

attention ought to be given to the momentous topic of the soul's salvation, as in no other way can we anticipate a happy eternity. After death there are only two states. At that solemn event the righteous go into life eternal; the wicked descend to everlasting misery. This is a truth solemn beyond conception. But it is no less certain when you die you will go either to heaven or to hell. You will either be admitted to the society of blessed spirits, or joined to the company of devils. The great question then resolves into this: Whether will you lie down in everlasting burning, or dwell with devouring fire; or whether will you ascend to the mansions of the blessed, and enjoy an eternity of happiness? The answer to such a question it is not difficult to know. But be assured, O man, whosoever thou art, that thou shalt never escape the former, and never enter upon the latter, without a practical application of the truths now stated. Pray the Holy Spirit of all grace that thou mayest attain such a consummation, and that by the working of that Spirit in thy soul thou mayest at the last day be found united to Him who is the resurrection and life. Amen.

THE MANNER IN WHICH WE OUGHT TO VIEW OUR AFFLICTIONS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ELDER STREET CHAPEL, EDINBURGH, ON 17TH MARCH, 1833,

By the Rev. THOMAS SWAN,

Birmingham.

"*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*"—2 COR. iv. 17.

IN the preceding part of this chapter, the holy Apostle presents before us an enumeration of those great afflictions which he and his fellow-labourers endured, in consequence of their attachment to Christ, and their employment as his ambassadors, as the messengers of mercy, to a guilty world. They were, indeed, highly honoured in being called to such an office; but it was not all honour. Much peril and tribulation were connected with it. The Apostle mentions their trials; but, at the same time, he tells us of those supports which were administered to them amid all their sufferings. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed—always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." In the verses preceding the text, he tells us, "that all things were for the sake of believers, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God—for which cause," he says, "we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." He was animated to all his labours, not only by the important consideration of the glory of God, but also by the end that was in view. Though he had much outward suffering, yet he had great inward consolation; though his outward man faded, yet his inward man flourished, being renewed day by day; and encouraged by his present enjoyments, and animated by his future prospects, he exclaimed, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

I. Let us consider the *manner in which the Apostle teaches Christians to view their afflictions:* "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment." This is the view the Apostle presents before you, whatever your affliction may be. It may be profitable that you should contemplate it in this light. You are not always disposed to do it; you are apt to magnify your troubles rather than to diminish them—to view them as great, rather than to consider them as little. In the human mind there is a strong aversion

to trouble of any kind. It is not grateful to the spirit of man. He revolts from it; he cannot endure it. He is born to it; but without divine grace, never can become reconciled to it. It is indeed true, that trouble, or affliction, in itself, is not agreeable. This is admitted, even by the Apostle himself, in his epistle to the Hebrews, "Now no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." In itself it is no cause of joy; it yields no delight; it is hard to be endured; it is painful to the flesh, and irritating to the spirit. It is very disagreeable, and very oppressive. But yet, in this place, the Apostle presents it before us in a different light—he places it in a very attractive point of view. He dissipates all its gloom, and irradiates it with glory. He makes it out to be a very trivial and a very insignificant thing. You think it heavy, even when you view it abstractly—but especially so, whatever it may be, when it comes upon you. It seems to you dark enough before it come, and you tremble at the prospect; but when it comes, you feel as if you could not sustain it, as if it were heavier than you can bear, as if you should entirely sink under it; you think you are in deep waters, and that you shall be overwhelmed; you think your burden is greater than you can bear; you feel that you are in darkness, and you see no light. But the Apostle will not admit that it is so. He says that it is *light*—a thing of no weight whatever—which ought to have no influence in crushing the spirit of the Christian. And, besides, you think the time of your affliction long, however short it may be. Though it may not be on you many years, or months, or even days, you imagine it long, and anxiously desire its removal; and you never think it too short; at least, you are not apt to do so. But the Apostle wishes you to view it as very short—even as momentary; he calls it the "momentary lightness of our affliction."

Now, the question is, whether this be the right view. It might almost be presumed it is, when we reflect that it is the view which an Apostle gives—one who was not apt to be deceived, one who could not be deceived, and one certainly who would not deceive others; one who, on the contrary, presented this view of the subject for the purpose of consolation, that he might comfort the hearts of Christians, and raise them above their afflictions. But it will be found that this view of affliction is reasonable, and is founded in truth; that it is true in itself, apart from the implied assertion of the Apostle. Paul is here speaking comparatively. He is contrasting the affliction of time with the glory of eternity. As for his own affliction as a Christian, and especially as an Apostle, and that of his fellow-labourers, he knew that in itself it was both heavy, grievous to be borne, and long-continued; for great, indeed, were the sorrows of the Apostles, and they remained with them as long as life itself. They had no expectation of exemption until death. But the mind of Paul was full of the future. His eye was full of an *exceeding weight of glory* which language could not express; in comparison to that his affliction was light—even levity itself—not worthy of being mentioned; and by faith he saw the *eternity* of that glory, and then it seemed short indeed, contracted into a point that was invisible. And is not this a just and proper view of affliction? Does it not commend itself to your reason? Many of you who are Christians are scarcely afflicted at all. Every heart knoweth its own bitterness; but some of you have had very little affliction. When the cloud hath come over you, it hath very soon dispersed. You have had no storm—only a few drops, and the clear shining after the rain. This is the case with many Christians, especially in these peaceful times. They pass through the world with very little affliction; they appear to be wafted to heaven in great comfort and felicity. But, even if it were not so, if all Christians were doomed, like the Apostles and primitive believers, to suffer affliction of the severest nature during the whole of their lives, still the assertion implied in the Apostle's words is true, when the future is taken into account. You must acknowledge that it is so. When you turn the eye of your faith to the exceeding weight of glory, and when you reflect that it is eternal, you must coincide with the Apostle, when he says, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment." It is true that, before you can do this, you must rise above your native level. You cannot feel sympathy with the Apostle, in this exalted view of affliction, if you continue where you are, if you grovel, if you remain on the low ground of this world, where you are involved in clouds and thick darkness. It is impossible. You must arise. You must ascend the mountain of elevated contempla-

tion. You must aspire to attain the height of the subject. You must be under the influence of a vigorous faith—not looking at the things which are seen, but at those which are unseen. Your mind must be more filled with the future than it is with the present. You must endeavour, in some measure, to comprehend the glory *to be revealed;* to take in, as much as a spiritual mind on earth can, the vast extent of it; and to apprehend its eternity; otherwise, you cannot even understand the meaning of the Apostle. You must soar aloft; and, bursting the bounds of time and space, you must rise even to the throne of God, where, contemplating the glory that awaits Christians, and the eternal nature of it, you will be able to say with the Apostle, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment."

II. *Consider the influence of affliction in preparing Christians for future glory.* This is stated in the text: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" or, as it might be, "prepareth us for," &c. And this is not only a delightful, but a most important view of affliction, which ought to render it acceptable to the believer, and lead him to welcome it with greater cordiality than he generally does. The tendency of affliction is to prepare him for inconceivable and eternal glory. Hence affliction is part of the discipline of the covenant of grace; and it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness in all who are properly exercised under it. In the furnace of affliction the dross and the tin are taken away, and Christians are gradually refined until they become perfectly pure. Surely this idea is calculated to reconcile them to those afflictions that are painful to endure, and that they can scarcely think light or short.

But how do afflictions prepare Christians for glory? They work in them a meetness or suitableness for it. Naturally they are unprepared, and corruption is strong within them. The depraved nature strives for the mastery. The love of sin is strong in the soul, and sometimes threatens to carry all before it. But afflictions are sent, and these weaken the power of corruption. The mind of the Christian may be unduly set upon worldly objects, which are of various kinds. These are removed. The Supreme Disposer takes away beloved relations who are idolized, or riches which have been the object of trust, or pleasures which have taken away the heart, or honours which have been supremely sought after. These are removed, and then the Christian is brought to God, as his only refuge, where alone he can find rest. He seeks his enjoyment in God, and raises his mind to heaven. He becomes more indifferent to the world, more set upon spiritual attainments, more anxious for an increase of faith, of hope, of love, of knowledge, and of holiness. His affections are elevated, set on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. He is more heavenly-minded. He is more deeply impressed with the vanity and unsatisfactory nature of all earthly things. He is convinced that the world cannot be a portion for his immortal spirit; and that perfect trust in the Redeemer is that after which he should continually aspire. In this way affliction prepares him for a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Thus do afflictions *work* for glory to Christians, inasmuch as they are means, in the hand of the Spirit, in preparing Christians for heaven, in rendering them partakers of God's holiness, in conforming them to Christ, and in enhancing their spiritual enjoyments; for, in the deepest affliction, they have often been the happiest; in the darkest night they have often been blessed with sweetest songs.

But there is another sense in which this passage may be understood. In proportion to the *extent of the affliction of Christians*, especially for their attachment to the Redeemer, will be their *future glory*. Doubtless this was the view of the Apostle. He and his fellow-labourers suffered much for Christ. But when they looked forward to the recompense of the reward, all their labours seemed light, all their sufferings momentary. And so they were, contrasted with that which was before them.—All that you can do or suffer for Christ, in itself, is without merit; but yet it will be rewarded. It will not be done or endured in vain. A reward of grace is attached to it, which, on account of the infinite merit of Christ, will be conferred. This is sufficient to cheer your hearts, especially amid those reproaches you may be called to endure for your attachment to Christ. Let this prospect encourage and elevate your hearts: "if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye." At the present time, your

afflictions of this nature are hardly to be named; and will you be cast down on account of them? "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings." Your enemies know not that all their enmity and all their reproaches are adding to the lustre of your future crown. Now, you may go mourning all the day, your heart being exceedingly depressed, and you arrayed in sackcloth; but think of your future splendour and joy; anticipate that for which all your sorrows of every kind are preparing you—a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

III. And now we are naturally led to the *contemplation of this glory itself.* But how shall we be able to rise to the height of the subject? It is evident, from the language employed by the Apostle in the original, that he labours for suitable expressions to convey his thoughts. Though an Apostle, and under the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, such were his views and his conceptions of the future heavenly glory, that, in the whole compass of the languages he knew, he could not find words adequately to express his thoughts. Associating the Hebrew and the Greek together, as he does in this place, he manifests that they were incompetent to the full communication of his ideas. Our translation, impressive and magnificent though it be, does not at all convey the sense of the original. It has been justly observed, that this sentence is one of the most emphatical in all Paul's writings, and that he here expresses himself more like an orator than an apostle; that the original phrase is infinitely emphatical, and cannot be expressed by any translation: "It signifies, that all hyperboles fall short of describing that weighty eternal glory, so solid and lasting, that you may pass from one hyperbole to another; and yet when you have gained the last, you are infinitely below it."* It reminds one of Paul, when he had returned from the third heavens. He saw glories which, he says, it was not lawful for him to utter—glories which were not adapted to human vision, and which human language had not been invented to convey the idea of. So here, in contemplating, under the influence of the Spirit of inspiration, the future glories that were in reserve for him, and all Christians who followed their Lord through evil and good report, he felt unable fully to impart what he conceived; or, rather, the subject transcended his conceptions; it baffled all his efforts of thought, and left him to say, that if hyperbole were added to hyperbole, even in that case it would remain concealed.

And how delightful is the thought that, as Christians, we are expectants of a glory of which we can form no adequate idea; that the glory of heaven transcends all we can conceive or express; that though we collect together, in one grand conception, all that in the entire universe is great, beautiful, or fair, even then we shall fall far short of the heavenly reality; even then we shall only speak and think as children, whose ideas and expressions do not come up to the reality of things. Who can describe the greatness of things eternal? We can only judge from what we see; and it must be confessed, that in the visible universe much is to be beheld that impresses us with the greatness and the power of God. Even on our own little globe, many striking forms of nobleness and beauty meet us at every turn. The earth is full of riches, of beauty, of sublimity; scenes of glory and wonder everywhere present themselves; in green and fruitful vales, adorned with flowers and trees, intersected by beautiful rivers and streams; in hills of every variety of elegance of form, covered with peaceful flocks; in lofty mountains which elevate their heads to the sky, some of them covered with eternal snow, which, under the shining of the sun, present to the distant observer an aspect of surpassing glory. Then there is the great and wide sea, in which are innumerable kinds of fishes of exquisite beauty, and which itself presents continually to those who dwell upon its everchanging scenes of fascination and wonder; besides all those glorious objects which are concealed in its unvisited depths, which eye hath never beheld.

> "Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear."

Then let us rise to the sky, which the Almighty hath adorned with millions of worlds, and which, when the light of the sun departs, become visible to the naked eye; so that, in one sense, we may be said to behold more in the absence of the sun than in his presence. When the morning dawns, we rejoice in the returning light;

* Doddrige, in loc.

we exult to behold anew the varied glories of this lower world ; but even the sun himself conceals from our view the surpassing wonders of the heavens. But all the glory of the material world must fall infinitely short in representing that which awaits real Christians. The glory of the visible creation is indeed great ; and from what we see, may we not anticipate to dwell for ever in a region transcendently sublime? You have often beheld scenes on the earth and in the sky, which have greatly impressed you, which have affected you with the most delightful emotions, even with delight approaching to ecstasy. You have been filled with admiration at those displays of the perfections of the Deity which you have seen ; and, in the narratives of intelligent travellers, you have been struck with surprise at what they have seen, and at the relations they give of various and new objects. Your minds have been more impressed with the wonders of creation. But what are all these in comparison to the brightness of this glory ? The greatest and most beautiful objects shrink away in the comparison. They fade from the view. As, in the light of the sun, the stars are all concealed, so in the glory of eternal things all that is beautiful, and splendid, and sublime on the earth, disappears. Imagine every star in the firmament, from horizon to horizon, a sun, and all these combined into one, and that one multiplied into millions—what a blaze of light would emanate from these immense bodies ! and imagine that the eye of man were so constituted that he could rejoice in all that light, would not his emotions be infinitely delightful ? But all that glory, great as it would be, is darkness in comparison to this ; it will be a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

But we must beware of losing ourselves in generalities, which is so easy to do on this great subject. We are not destitute of definite ideas on which to fix our minds. Though it transcend all conception and expression, yet we may present intelligent descriptions, which will give distinctness to our thoughts, and thus enhance the rationality of our expectations. There is no need that we should indulge in enthusiastic vagaries, when the word of truth hath imparted so much that is useful and edifying, calculated to animate our hopes, and quicken us in our endeavours in the way to heaven.

This is an exceeding *weight of glory ;* it will, in its very nature, be *substantial, weighty, solid.* Now, this is a quality you well understand, and on which you can fix your hopes. In this it forms a striking contrast to the objects of the world, even the weightiest and most important of them. In comparison to this, even affliction, which men consider very heavy, is *light*—so light as not to be worth naming ; nor should it be allowed unduly to press down the spirit of any heir of this glory. But men consider wealth weighty. It is, however, all a mistake. Nothing can be more delusive. "Wherefore do ye set your eyes upon that which *is not?* for riches make to themselves wings ; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." All the riches of this world, or of ten thousand worlds, are not to be compared to this. They are, in comparison, less than nothing and vanity. Oh! that all the misers on earth would think of this! and that, instead of accumulating so eagerly their perishing gold, which they cannot take with them to the grave, which would do them no good if it were made into a sepulchre for them, and which certainly will not procure happiness for them in the next world—they would strive to attain this "far more exceeding weight of glory." There is no substance in any thing else, nothing to lay hold upon, nothing that will fill or satisfy the soul. All else will soon fail. The mountains will melt, the firmest thrones will shake, the sun himself will fall, and the heavens depart like a scroll ; but then will this remain : "That I may cause those that love me," saith God, "to inherit substance."

This is such a *weight of glory* that Christians could not sustain it, if they were not prepared and strengthened by Omnipotence to do it. Otherwise they could not bear up under it. Even in the world men are not always able to sustain their circumstances. Some sink under the load of affliction. Some are not able to bear honour, or wealth, or prosperity, in any kind. "The prosperity of fools destroys them." It is too much for them. They are not able to bear it. It requires a certain form of character to act well in certain circumstances. Now, this applies exactly in the present case. To bear up under this weight of glory, it is necessary that the soul of the Christian should be absolutely perfect—completely delivered from sin ; and, at the

last day, when there will be a vast accession to the glory, a body fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body will be necessary: thus the soul and body of the Christian will not only be adapted to each other, but they will also be adapted to the glory which is to be bestowed upon them. And God *can* do this. At the present time you could not bear this glory. Even a little of it, a few rays of it, would dazzle and confound you. Some have almost died under the ecstasy of religious enjoyment. They have experienced as much as they could endure. But you will be fitted, after a little more affliction, for all this glory. It will not press you down; it will never exhaust you; under it all you will soar.

And what will it be? It will be all the fulness of the Deity—all the glory of God in Christ. You will then know what it is to have God for your portion and inheritance, which you do not think of so often as you ought to do on earth; all the glory of his wonderful perfections will then be yours. According to that infinite fulness, which will yield you an eternal supply, you will be blessed with a large measure of divine love; you will then be perfect in *love*—in love to God and his holy ones, in whom then you will discern no spot of imperfection; you will be perfect in *holiness*, entirely free from that which God hates, and which hath often made you sigh and weep; you will be like Christ, arrayed in white robes, and you will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father; you will be blessed with all *knowledge;* nothing that is valuable will be concealed from you; all mysteries, in nature, providence, and grace, will shine out clearly in your view; immense *dignity* will be conferred upon you; in the presence of the greatest spirits you will be honoured by God himself, and will be exalted to sit on the throne of Christ; and your *happiness* will be complete; your joy will be full; you will experience the fulness of joy. All this will be given you in the presence of God, according to his glory and the measure of your capacity. Conceive what it will be! and, add to all, it will be *eternal;* unlike the glories of the world, which are evanescent as the dews of the morning, or the flowers of the field—this is eternal—will be enjoyed while God lives and endless ages roll. Now, with this prospect, will not Christians welcome all their affliction? Yea, will they not delight in it, since it prepares them for so immense a glory? Will they not say with the Apostle, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?"

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES DUNCAN, Kincardine.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE MINISTERIAL TRUST;

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD OF BURGHER SECEDERS IN EDINBURGH, 11TH MAY, 1835,

By the Rev. JAMES DUNCAN,
Kincardine.

"*Stewards of the mysteries of God.*"—1 COR. iv. 1.

It appears from the preceding part of this Epistle, that schisms and animosities prevailed to a very alarming extent among the members of the Corinthian church. During the period of his absence from them, Paul was apprized that they were divided into parties, each distinguishing themselves by the name of him under whose ministry they had been converted or edified. One said, I am of Paul; another, I of Apollos; a third, I of Cephas; and a fourth, I of Christ. Grieved at this account, and anxious to correct their dangerous error, he addressed to them this epistle, in which he warmly remonstrates with them on the absurdity and evil of their conduct. In the first chapter of the epistle, after alluding to his knowledge of the party-spirit, and the contentions which had arisen among them, he asks them, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"—questions these, the simple proposal of which, implying as they do a strong negation, was a reproof to the Corinthians for attaching themselves to and exulting in their connexion with particular ministers of Jesus Christ. In the latter part of that chapter, the Apostle shows with admirable clearness and force that, in the method of redemption, as furnishing an illustrious display of the divine wisdom and power, all boasting in men is entirely excluded, and a foundation laid for glorying only in the Lord. At its conclusion he says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

In the third chapter of this epistle, in language of rebuke and instruction, Paul again adverts to the prevailing dissensions in the Corinthian church, through that factious party-spirit which its members unhappily possessed and displayed. He reasons with them on the carnality which their temper of exalting one minister to the disparaging of another evinced, and what was worse to the dishonouring of Christ, to whom these stood equally in the relation, and acted equally in the capacity of servants. Such a disposition awakened prejudices in their minds, and gave rise to debates and divisions among them, by which they were assimilated to persons who were entirely under the government of natural feelings and worldly principles. Accordingly, in the 3d and 4th verses of the chapter referred to, the Apostle says, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" Desirous to cure them of this evil of improper partiality to ministers and glorying in men, solicitous that neither he nor any of those associated with him in the work of the

ministry should receive aught of the honour which was due only to God, he asks them, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, whom ye are so fond of exalting, and for the precedence to one or other of whom, in the zeal of partisanship, ye are so disposed to contend; what and who are they but ministers or servants of Christ by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." As if the Apostle had said, I was the first that preached the Gospel at Corinth; on leaving it Apollos succeeded me in this employment; and if our labours were successful in accomplishing in any measure the end intended, the glory is due to God only, whose accompanying power and enriching blessing rendered them thus effectual. So then argues the Apostle, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one, one not only with respect to the doctrines which they preach, in regard to the design and end of their ministrations, but one as to their own entire inability to give efficacy to their preaching, and their total dependence on God for the profitableness of all their labours. Thus, by declaring the utter insufficiency of the preachers of the Gospel for rendering the word delivered by them effectual to salvation, and by ascribing to God as the efficient cause, all the fruits of their ministrations did the Apostle endeavour to subdue the party-spirit, and to allay the unseemly differences which had disturbed the peace and happiness of the Corinthian church; while, in the following part of that chapter, with the design of exalting Jesus in the estimation of the Corinthians, and of exciting them to glory only in Him, he exhibits him as the only foundation on which the Church, in all its doctrines and duties, ministrations and hopes, privileges and blessings, exclusively rests. "For other foundation," says he in the 11th verse, "can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In the 21st verse he draws this inference from his reasoning and illustrations in the former part of the chapter: "Therefore let no man glory in men; for," in addition to what he has already said enforcing this caution, he states, "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." These ministers of the Gospel are yours, not your masters and lords, but your teachers and servants, as appointed by Christ for promoting your good by their gifts and graces, example and ministrations. Other privileges belonging to them are mentioned with the same design of putting an end to their divisions, and uniting them in love. The world is yours, so far as it is conducive to your good; life is yours, as the period of your preparation for heaven; death is yours, as the gate through which you pass to the regions of bliss; things present are yours, for the furtherance of your sanctification; things to come are yours, to constitute your everlasting glory. Lest any thing else belonging to believers should have been omitted in this inventory of their possessions, the assertion is repeated, "All are yours;" while, as their security for enjoying the whole, and as furnishing another reason for not glorying in men, but for glorying only in the Lord, it is added, "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Closely connected with what the Apostle has said in the preceding part of the epistle, is the verse at the commencement of the fourth chapter that contains our text, the words of which are an injunction not to think too highly, nor what is equally reprehensible to cherish too low an opinion of any of the preachers of the Gospel. A party in the church at Corinth said they were of Christ. They pretended to be so much under his immediate influence and instruction, that, in their own estimation, they had no need of other teachers, not even the Apostle excepted. They despised the means and instruments of his appointment and employment in the church. "What," said they, "is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas to us? We are of Christ; he alone is our instructor, and we will submit to no other." For the reproof and instruction of such in the Corinthian church, as thus undervalued and despised all the ministers of Christ, as well as for the reproof and instruction of the other parties in it, who were disposed to exalt the servants above their Lord, the Apostle in this passage says, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ;" or, let us be regarded as acting under and for Christ in the church, he adds, "and stewards of the mysteries of God."

It is to this latter designation given to the ministers of the Gospel that, in dependence on divine aid, I mean to direct your attention; and, in confining our meditations to it, will endeavour to show the aptness and propriety of its application to them in an illustration of the following particulars:

I. *Stewards fill an honourable, but subordinate office.*

A steward, you are aware, is a person who is set over a certain household, for the purpose of superintending and regulating its affairs. "Who then," said Jesus, "is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household?" The office of stewards, therefore, is honourable, as it has rule or government connected with it, in executing which, those clothed with this office are the representatives generally of persons of affluence and rank. In like manner ministers of the Gospel fill an honourable office, the most honourable of any in the church—the most honourable of any in the world. They are rulers in the house of God, and in executing their official duties they are the representatives of Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. In preaching the Gospel to men, they appear before them in the character of God's ambassadors, as authorized and sent by him to negotiate with sinners respecting matters of the highest magnitude and importance, as affecting their present and their everlasting well-being. "Now then," is the message which they bring, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Sustaining, then, the character of rulers in God's house, and representatives of the Majesty of Heaven, the office with which ministers of the Gospel are clothed must be an honourable one; and when it is consistently filled, claims and deserves respect from all. The apostle Paul, who, it must be admitted, was eminently adorned with humility, as not in the least incompatible with it, magnified his office as a minister of Christ, and enjoined that it should be respected and esteemed in the persons of others. "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness," said he, referring to Epaphroditus, his companion in labour, "and hold such in reputation." And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine."

But, in connexion with its being an honourable, we mentioned that the office of stewards is one of subordination. It is no less a subordinate, than it is an honourable office. It is, indeed, the highest office in the house over which a steward is appointed; but still it is held under him who is the lord of the steward, who clothed him with the office, and who furnishes him with the requisites for its discharge. At best he is no more than a servant. In correspondence with this, ministers of the Gospel, though filling the most dignified office in the church, are in every respect subordinate, and but servants in it to Jesus Christ. He is the sole King and Head of Zion. To Him alone the Church is indebted for her existence, her constitution, her laws, ordinances and privileges, and to Him she therefore owes, both as a debt of obedience and gratitude, her undivided worship and homage. When popes and earthly monarchs claim, as they have done, the headship of the Church, they are guilty of invading the rights and usurping the prerogatives of Jesus; and in yielding to these at any time what they arrogantly and blasphemously demand, she is chargeable with the aggravated evils of treachery and idolatry. Sovereignty in the holy hill of Zion is that glory which Christ will not give to another, which he will not suffer others with impunity to claim, which he will not tolerate his visible church in acts of will-worship to concede to any. To Him as the only King and Head of the Church, in common with others within its pale, all the ministers of the Gospel are in rightful subjection. From Him they received the appointment to their office; for, "when he ascended up on high, he gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ." From him are derived all those qualifications which are necessary for the effectual discharge of their office. Besides, all their concerns are at his absolute disposal By the secret arrangements of his providence, he appoints the bounds of their habitation; he allots them their respective fields of labour, and he also assigns them the measure of their success. In short, all their support and encouragement in the work of the ministry proceed from him; for while he prescribed to them, as their Lord, what they were to do in these words, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded," he added, and the assurance of which they have found a source of

consolation and joy, amid many difficulties, and under much distress: "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, or in the midst of the church, Jesus holds the stars, or the ministers of the Gospel, in his right hand. In other words, he directs, strengthens, and animates them in the discharge of their numerous and arduous duties. It is thus manifest that they are all subordinated to King Jesus in the Church; and while the certainty of this should teach them to beware of lording it over God's heritage, and of seeking to have dominion over the faith of any, it ought to awaken in them internal desires to be instrumental in convincing and converting sinners, and in increasing the faith and joy of the people of God. In all their ministrations, ever bearing and anxious to display the becoming and beautiful motto, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

II. *Stewards have a trust committed to them.*

The office of a steward is to take charge of the estate of his lord, it being intrusted by him to his management and care. Agreeably to this, ministers of the Gospel have a trust committed to them—a trust of all others the most sacred and important. Time, talents, opportunities, and spheres of usefulness, are, if I may be allowed the expression, a portion of the goods committed to their charge, by Jesus the sovereign proprietor of all, to be used for the purposes of his glory and the good of his Church. But the trust delivered to them that is mentioned in the text, you will notice, is the mysteries of God; in other words, the doctrines of the Gospel, or the whole of divine truth contained in the Scriptures.* This is what the Apostle elsewhere calls the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which, he says, was committed to his trust. This is the treasure which is deposited in earthen vessels, or in the ministers of Christ, that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of God, and not of man. The Gospel, which is a development of the plan and a revelation of the blessings of redemption, is frequently in Scripture denominated a mystery. In Mark iv. 11, Rom. xvi. 25, 1 Cor. ii. 7, Colos. i. 26, and in other passages of Scripture, the term mystery is very obviously to be understood as expressive of the Gospel. Among the ancient heathen there were greater and lesser mysteries, which the initiated were under the most sacred obligations not to divulge. As it is somewhere stated, an image stood before their temples with the finger placed upon the mouth—an intimation to the worshippers that they were not to disclose what was transacted within, which prohibition is not to be regretted, as many of those transactions, it is certain, were of a character the most licentious and abominable. There were the mystery of iniquity, in contradistinction to which the Gospel is the mystery of godliness.

For various reasons the Gospel is designed a mystery. It receives this appellation, I apprehend, because its gracious doctrines would have remained eternally hid in the mind of God, had it not pleased him to have made a revelation of them to man. After a two thousand years' trial of what reason and the light of nature could discover, it is affirmed, "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and if, after the lapse of that long period of time, it had made no proper discoveries of the character of God, far less had it made any approaches to the finding out of the only method of a sinner's pardon and acceptance with him. Farther, the Gospel is designed *a mystery*, because it was but obscurely and, comparatively speaking, partially revealed under the Old Testament economy. Its doctrines of salvation were exhibited through the medium of types and ceremonies, prophecies and promises, and seen only externally in this glass, were consequently at best but imperfectly understood. Accordingly, the apostle Paul speaks of the Gospel as the mystery which was hid from ages and from generations. A more full and intelligible revelation of it was reserved for that better dispensation under which it is our privilege to live. What was only in shadow under the Old Testament, is disclosed under the New in substance. What holy men of old were so anxious, and at such pains, to understand

* In his Commentary, the judicious Guyse makes the following remarks on this expression, "The mysteries of God." "By the mysteries of God," says he, "some understand the word and sacraments. But though the last, as well as the first, of these are to be dispensed by the ministers of Christ, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper were often styled mysteries by the ancients, yet I don't find that the Scripture ever uses the word in the last of these senses; and the Apostle has said of himself, chapter i. 17, that the principal work for which Christ sent him was not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, and this is what he immediately refers to here. For this best agrees with the foregoing context, and with his own use of the word in other places, where, by mysteries, he commonly means the doctrines of Christ in one view or other, and often with respect to the calling of the Gentiles."

in the history of Christ, and in the writings of his Apostles, we have plainly revealed. "Of which salvation," says the apostle Peter, "the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." By the mission of his Son into the world in the fulness of the time, and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God designed, as Paul informs us, "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." In short, the Gospel is styled a *mystery*, because it can only be properly understood through the teaching of the Spirit of God. No man, be he what he may, let him be ever so learned in the wisdom of this world, is able by his own unassisted powers of intellect to comprehend aright any part of the revealed mystery of godliness in the Scriptures. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "Howbeit," says the same Apostle from whom we have now quoted, "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

In the gospel of the blessed God there is a variety of mysteries, and accordingly in the text the word is used in the plural number, "the mysteries of God." There are different kinds of them. There are mysteries which, though disclosed in Scripture as to their existence and reality, are not level to, but far above the comprehension of a finite mind. Such is the doctrine of the Trinity, or of three in one, and one in three; and such also is the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God, or of the union of two entirely distinct natures subsisting in one person. Again, there are mysteries which, having been revealed by God in his word, may in some measure be understood and explained. Such are the doctrines of the fall and consequent ruin of man; the substitution of, and satisfaction rendered by the Lord Jesus Christ; justification by grace through faith in the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer; the necessity and sufficiency of divine influence to a life of growing holiness; the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life in a future world. In a word, there are mysteries in the Gospel which, though not at present comprehended by the believer, will be fully disclosed to him in that state of blissful being to which in this world he is advancing. Referring to one of these, the mystery concerning himself and the Church, or what is termed the mystical union, our Lord says, "At that day," at the time when his people were to be with him in glory, "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known."

Of these mysteries ministers are the stewards—to them they are committed as a sacred and important trust. The commission given to them is, "Go and preach the Gospel;" and with their fulfilment of this divine command is inseparably connected the everlasting happiness and the everlasting misery of the souls of their hearers, which also form an important and interesting part of their trust. In making known the mysteries of the Gospel, they are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one they are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life."

III. *Stewards are required to be faithful to their trust.*

"Moreover," says the Apostle in the 2d verse of this chapter, "it is required in

stewards that a man be found faithful." They are not his own, but his lord's goods that a steward has in his custody, and therefore he must be particularly careful not to embezzle or squander any portion of them, but to lay out the whole to the best advantage for the good of his employer. In agreement with this, it is required from ministers who are stewards of the mysteries of God that they be found faithful to the trust confided in them by their heavenly Master. The fidelity that is required and expected has a respect to the proper employment of their time, the diligent cultivation of their gifts, and the unreserved consecration of all their energies to the glory of God in the advancement of his kingdom in the world. But our attention is particularly called to *ministerial* fidelity, as it relates to the mysteries of God—the great and glorious doctrines of the Gospel, of which ministers are in the text declared to be stewards.

It must be obvious, that fidelity requires from ministers of the Gospel that they be *well acquainted* with those mysteries which it discloses. No such thing as faithfulness to the trust committed to him could be displayed by a worldly steward, were he ignorant of what mistrust was, had he no correct knowledge of the estate placed under his superintendence, or of the goods that were consigned to his management and care. In like manner, it is impossible that those stewards of the mysteries of God can be faithful to their trust who are unacquainted with it—who do not give all diligence in perusing the Scriptures, to become scribes well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. If the Word of God, especially the preaching of it, be the grand appointed mean of conviction, conversion, and establishment in the faith; if it be the treasury out of which are to be brought things new and old; if it be the storehouse out of which food is to be fetched for the wants of famishing souls; if, in short, it be the armoury out of which are to be collected those spiritual weapons with which men need to be furnished in the christian warfare—how, we would ask, can those stewards of divine mysteries be otherwise than unfaithful to their trust, who are at no pains to be familiar with, and of course are unskilful in the oracles of the living God? With the Bible, which throughout is their letter of recommendation to men, and the message which they are to carry to them, the ministers of Christ should be daily conversant. While the command, "Search the Scriptures," is given to all, attention to it is especially required from those whose office is to enlighten others, by expounding and illustrating what the Word of God contains. As the light of the world, then, in them the word of Christ should dwell eminently and richly in all wisdom. "Give attendance," said Paul to his son Timothy, "to reading"—and there can be no doubt as to his referring principally to the reading of the Scriptures—"meditate upon those things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all."

It is the duty of a worldly steward, and fidelity to his trust requires his attention to it, to provide food for, and impartially and seasonably to distribute it among the members of the house over which he is set. "Who then," said Jesus, "is that wise and faithful steward whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" In correspondence with this, it is the duty of those who are stewards of the mysteries of God, and fidelity to their trust demands it of them, to be attentive to the spiritual wants of those among whom they labour, and to make careful *provision* of what is requisite for the supplyment of these. This they are bound to do, in endeavouring to know the spiritual state of their people; in diligently and prayerfully perusing the Word of God; in using such helps for understanding the Scriptures as may be within their reach; and, also, in conscientiously devoting a portion of their time to the collection and proper arrangement of the thoughts that may be presented in the form of pulpit instructions. In reference to this last particular, an admirable sermon-writer remarks: "He that makes no preparation beforehand what he shall say to his people, tempts God to come out of his ordinary way to his assistance; as he that trusts wholly to his own preparation makes a god of his gifts." But ministers of the Gospel are not only to provide; their duty is also as stewards to *distribute* spiritual food among the members of God's household. They are commanded to feed the flock of God which is among them—to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. The only food for immortal souls, I would take the liberty of remarking, is divine truth. This, and this alone is adapted to their necessities, and

designed for their nourishment. After a life of much experience and success in the ministry, the venerable Isaac Watts thus addressed a young man who was entering into it: "Had you all the refined science of Socrates or Plato, all the skill in morals that ever was attained by Zeno, Seneca, or Epictetus; were you furnished with all the flowing oratory of Cicero, or the thunder of Demosthenes; were all the excellences united in one man, and were you the person so richly endowed, and could you employ them all in every sermon you preach, yet you could have no reasonable hope to convert and save one soul were you to lay aside the glorious Gospel of Christ, and leave it out of your discourses." An acquaintance with human literature is, indeed, a valuable acquirement. It may be rendered subservient to, and useful for the purposes of religion; and with this view it may be studied with great advantage by the ministers of the Gospel. But while they give to it a share of their attention, they must ever be careful to draw all their instructions, not from the opinions of fallible men however learned, but only from the unerring declarations of Jehovah in the Scriptures. They must never substitute any thing of their own, or of others, for what God has written, or debase and pollute his pure word, by mingling with it idle speculations and unprofitable novelties. "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord;" or what are the fancies of men compared with the word of the God of truth? The former like chaff is light, and easily carried away; the latter like wheat is solid and durable. "In vain," said our Lord, respecting the hypocritical Pharisees, "they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." "To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Fidelity requires from the stewards of the mysteries of God an *impartial* distribution of the Word of Life. Every one belonging to the household, or to the visible Church of God, without any exception, is to have his portion of meat given him. Saints and sinners are alike to have the Word of Truth rightly divided among them. The former need to be comforted and assisted; the latter to be cautioned and directed by it. To be pure from the blood of all men, the whole counsel of God must be declared to them in its suitableness to their diversified character and circumstances. In the bold and uncompromising publication of it, warning every man, and teaching every man, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. But the Word of Life is not only to be impartially dispensed—none neglected or overlooked in the distribution of it, it is also to be *seasonably* administered. All in the visible church are to have their portion of meat given them in due season. Among the hearers of the Gospel, a great variety of character and condition are to be found. Thereby the steward of God must be carefully studied, and exhibited in the light of Scripture which throughout is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. The ignorant and careless, the presumptuous and profane, the formalist and hypocrite, the self-righteous and lukewarm, are alike seasonably addressed by him, when he faithfully exposes their guilt, fearlessly proclaims their doom, and earnestly and affectionately points them to their only remedy. But to others besides these, he is required to speak a word in season. The people of God stand often in urgent need of this. They are sometimes wandering, and need to be reclaimed; they are sometimes under temptation, and need to be fortified; they are sometimes timorous, and need to be encouraged; they are sometimes in darkness, and need to be enlightened; they are sometimes in heaviness through manifold trials, and need to be supported and comforted. In any of these conditions a word seasonably spoken to believers is like apples of gold in pictures of silver, and when accompanied with divine power, enables them to go on their way rejoicing. The ministers of the Gospel, then, should be anxious to learn of the divine Teacher, and to be imitators of him who said, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

Farther, it is the duty of a worldly steward vigilantly to watch, and anxiously to protect from spoliation the property which his Lord has committed to his trust. He is not entitled to the character of a faithful steward if he is careless, or unconcerned in this respect. In like manner it is the duty of the stewards of divine mysteries to watch over them, and to guard them against the attacks of their enemies. In every age the truths of God have been opposed and vilified by many. The avowed Infidel, the Arian,

and the Socinian, have had the effrontery and impiety to commence, and persevere in, an unhallowed attack on the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, and others have from time to time arisen to call in question, and to impugn different truths of revelation which happened not to coincide with their own likings and views. This being the case, it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to oppose them, in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints. Set as they are, like Paul, for the defence of the Gospel, it must be highly criminal—it is infidelity to their Lord—to remain indifferent to, and unaffected with, the injuries done by enemies to Christ and his blessed word. Impressed with this consideration; when the whole or any part of the mysteries of God are ridiculed, and condemned; when the enemy, *error*, comes in like a flood, they should up to the help of the Lord, and show themselves valiant for the truth upon the earth. Standing fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, in nothing terrified by their adversaries, assured that great is the truth, and that in spite of all opposition it shall prevail.

The steward of the mysteries of God who is faithful to his trust, in accordance with what is required of him, I have only to remark, farther, on this part of the subject, is decidedly *a man of God*. He declares to others what he has seen with his eyes, what he has looked upon, and what his hands have handled of the Word of Life. From the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. He has felt the power of religion in his own soul; he has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is, therefore, eminently qualified for making known to his fellow-men the unsearchable riches of Christ. How can those in the ministry, who are entirely destitute of such a character and of such experience, be faithful in the execution of the trust that has been committed to them? Is it at all to be expected that they will cordially recommend religion to others who are themselves destitute of it, or feel a solicitude for the salvation of others who are altogether unconcerned about the salvation of their own souls? Assuredly not. The faithful steward of the mysteries of God, then, we repeat it, is a renewed person. He walks with God in a life of dependence and prayer. The closet is his oratory, where he communes with his heavenly Father, cultivates a growing acquaintance with that Saviour whom he preaches to men, and implores assistance in his work, and a blessing to rest upon his labours. In fine, he is "an example to the believer inward, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and purity." "As the steward of God," he strives to "be blameless; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre. But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate."

IV. *Stewards are accountable for the trust that has been committed to them.*

"There was a certain rich man," said our Lord in one of his parables, "who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." This was a prodigal servant who was thus called to an account; but responsibility lies equally on those in this office, who are honest and upright in all their transactions. Both just and unjust stewards in managing their trust, may look forward with certainty to a day of reckoning with their Lord, which will sooner or later arrive. In agreement with this, ministers of the Gospel, without any exception, are accountable for the solemn trust which has been committed to them. "Obey them," says an Apostle, "that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." They are accountable to God from whom they receive their trust. Death is the solemn hour when they are required to surrender their stewardship, and to give an account of it to him. But beyond this there is an appointed period when, in their whole person, they will be summoned to appear, to answer for the manner in which they laid out, and improved that which was committed to their keeping. That is the judgment-day—the day when the great white throne shall be set, the books shall be opened, and the whole intelligent universe shall be gathered in one vast assembly. Ministers, with those who were under their charge, shall then stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall alike with them be the subjects of judicial investigation, and of solemn responsibility.

An account will then be demanded from them of their time, how it was spent by them—of their gifts, how they improved them—of the Gospel, how they preached it—and of precious souls as to the concern

manifested, and the efforts made by them for their salvation. And, oh! dismal will that day be—terrible beyond all conception must be that scrutiny to the stewards of God's mysteries who have been unfaithful to their trust; who squandered their time; who concealed or prostituted their talents; who declared not honestly and faithfully the counsel of God; whose hearts glowed not with compassion and love to the souls that were committed to their charge. The consciences of such will then accuse them of, and condemn them for, unfaithfulness to their Lord—those to whose spiritual necessities they were not careful to administer, and to whose perdition they may have been accessary, will then rise up in judgment against them, while their Lord himself whom they basely defrauded of his right, will proclaim their everlasting shame and disgrace in awarding them the punishment of their aggravated dishonesty and wickedness. Take ye, will he then say, the unprofitable servants and bind them hand and foot, and cast them into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. But, on the other hand, that of all others to the faithful stewards of the mysteries of God will be the most blissful day that ever dawned. It is the day which they often anticipated in this world, and the prospect of which, with its solemnities and consequences, excited them to diligence in discharging the duties of the trust which had been committed to them by their Lord. And having received grace to be faithful unto death, in occupying that with which they were intrusted, till their Lord came, they are on this day of solemn reckoning and retribution, enabled to give in their account with joy, and not with grief. That, therefore, is their coronation day; for the chief Shepherd having appeared, they receive according to his gracious promise the crown of life, the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Their Lord will then testify his approval of each of them in this language: "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing: of a truth, I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath."

In concluding this discourse, it is not my intention, reverend fathers and brethren, to detain you with any lengthened formal address. It is manifest from what has been said, and you know it as well as I do, that the duties connected with the office with which you are vested are arduous, and that the responsibility lying upon you is great. Convinced of this, you may be disposed to say, Who is sufficient for these things? who is able faithfully to discharge the duties of the ministerial trust? None, it is certain, in their own strength, or through any resources of their own, can ever properly accomplish the work of the christian ministry. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." Sensible of this you must look to another, you must place your reliance on a power nothing less than divine, if you would be found faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Your sufficiency is only of him, and it is matter of gratitude and encouragement to know that as his grace is essentially needed by, so it is no less plainly promised to, those whom he commissions as his ambassadors to men. He never sendeth any a warfare any time at his own charges; but to each of the ministers of the Gospel, says, "Lo, I am with you alway." "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Be it your concern and employment, then, to travel between your own emptiness and his fulness—in believing and importunate prayer to solicit his promised grace to help you in every time of need. The throne of grace is ever accessible, the ear of Jehovah is ever open to your cry. "Whatsoever," said Jesus, ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Daily supplicate, then, his wisdom to teach, his counsel to direct, his love to constrain, and his Spirit to assist you; then may you expect to have grace communicated to you from on high, for enabling you to be faithful unto death, in relation to the trust that is committed to you. Thus will you be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. "I commend you, beloved fathers and brethren, to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

To the christian people present, permit

me, before closing this discourse, to address a few words of exhortation. After what you have heard, my friends, of the duties and the responsibility of the ministers of the Gospel, you will certainly see the necessity, and may I indulge the hope, practise more than ever the duty of affectionately remembering them to God in all your approaches to him at the throne of grace. An Apostle thus pled for an interest in the prayers of those to whom he administered the Word of Life. "Praying always for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel." If one so eminently gifted as Paul was, needed an interest in the prayers of Christians, assuredly we who are less eminently endowed stand in more urgent request of the prayer of the people of God. Aware of this, and of the efficacy of importunate prayer with God, it is both your duty and interest to pray for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ; to pray for us, that the word of the Lord spoken by us may have free course, and be glorified. The more frequently and fervently you plead with God on our behalf, that we may have grace given us to be faithful, that we may receive from him of his own wherewith we may serve him, and that our labours may be blessed, the greater reason have you to expect that your souls will prosper under our ministrations. It is an old but true adage, "A praying people makes a preaching minister."

Farther, I would remind you, that in common with the ministers of Christ, you stand in the relation of stewards to God, what have you that you have not received from him, and which you are not bound to use for his glory? Ministers are stewards of his mysteries; in a certain sense you also bear this character, the Gospel being committed to you as an important and solemn trust. It is their duty to preach it faithfully, it is yours to wait upon the dispensation of it regularly. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," is the solemn command of the God of ordinances, and yet in contempt of it, how many professing Christians are but partial attenders in the house of God, are wilfully and without a sufficient reason absent when the word is expounded and illustrated by those on whose ministrations they are bound conscientiously and statedly to wait. This evil of irregularity in attendance on the preaching of the Gospel, so alarmingly prevalent in the present day, is weakening the hands and grieving the hearts of God's faithful ministers, whilst those chargeable with it are certainly incurring the divine displeasure, and are exposing themselves to a dreadful retribution. God will not permit this ordinance of his institution for the good of men to be despised and neglected with impunity. Be it your concern, my friends, to prize the trust of the Gospel that has been given to you—to manifest this by your waiting on God in its dispensation with that punctuality which an ordinance of such vast worth, and which the high authority of the God of heaven so peremptorily requires. Fidelity, in relation to your trust, demands this, while it is also requisite that you diligently improve what you hear, in meditating on it, in pleading that you may profit by it, and in endeavouring in dependence on promised grace to reduce it into daily practice. In fine, remember that as his stewards, you also are accountable to God for the trust of the Gospel which has been committed to you. At death you must surrender your stewardship; and on the day of the general judgment, you must personally appear before the tribunal of Christ to give an account of the improvement, or the misimprovement which you have made of your trust. Much having been given to you, much of you shall then be required. Then it will be known whether you have now received and embraced an offered Saviour, or whether you have neglected and despised his great salvation. If the latter, you will be discovered and proclaimed to have been unfaithful stewards, and yours will be the dreadful doom of all such. It will then be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you. If the former, which may God in his infinite mercy grant, yours will be the gracious reward of faithful stewards—a reward of happiness that is inconceivable and unending. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Now, the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

FALSE PROFESSORS OF RELIGION UNMASKED;

EXTRACT FROM A SERMON PREACHED IN BROUGHTON PLACE CHAPEL, ON SABBATH, 2D SEPTEMBER, 1832,

By the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D.

"*Let no man deceive himself.*"—1 COR. iii. 18.

CURIOSITY, or the love of knowledge, is one of the most powerful principles of human nature. Its influence can be traced to men of every age, and nation, and condition. Under its influence we find men undertaking long journeys, suffering many privations, and surrounded by innumerable dangers for the purpose of pursuing their laborious researches. Under its influence the traveller relinquishes all the comforts of home and of civilized life to wander in untrodden regions. The student denies himself the numerous pleasures of life, and sacrifices even his health to meditate upon the actions and opinions of former ages. The philosopher gives himself up to the study of the laws of the material universe, and to analyze the subtilty of the human mind. To the curious mind every thing strange and mysterious has peculiar charms, and it is under the influence of this principle so many spend their whole lives in telling and hearing some new thing. The power of this principle is immeasurable; it grows on what it feeds, and the man most anxious to know more is he who knows most. The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. "Know thyself," was the maxim of a venerable sage, and the words seem to have come down from heaven, for they are impressed with the stamp of heaven's approbation; I shall, therefore, turn your attention to the substance of the injunction in our text—"Let no man deceive himself." And my object is first to unfold the dangerous impositions which men practise on themselves. The decidedly irreligious deceive themselves by a false conception of the safety of their state; by supposing that God takes no account of the actions of men; that religion is impracticable; that there is no harm in yielding to the desires implanted in our nature; that God is too merciful to punish sin; that repentance is not very difficult, and that there will be abundance of time to attend to religion at some future period. How many try to say to themselves, "Peace, peace, while there is no peace," and without alarm consign themselves to the mansions of eternal misery. The false professor frequently deceives himself into a belief of the safety of his soul while living in sin, because saints of a very high order have been guilty of some heinous sins. We are very far either from denying or concealing that great saints have fallen into great sins: Noah was guilty of the sin of drunkenness, David of the sins of adultery and murder, and Peter of false swearing; but we are persuaded that He who brings good out of evil, intended to serve some good end, by permitting such things to take place, and by giving them a record in his blessed word, intended to show us the extremes of man's depravity, and to show us the importance of a continual dependence on God; to awaken us to a sense of our backsliding, and to keep us from sinking into utter despair. There is nothing more dangerous than to suppose, that because some good men have been guilty of great sins we also should be guilty of them. These good men, although they fell into these great sins, did not live in them. But there are men who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, who look upon Noah as a boon companion, and who take comfort and pleasure in reading portions of the Word of God, which make others redden with a blush of shame when they think that so good men should have been guilty of such crimes. These men resemble such saints only in their faults, but not in their deep repentance: "Thinkest thou who doest and sayest such things, that thou wilt escape the just judgment of God."

In the next place, the false professor deceives himself into a belief of the safety of his state, because he reasons with himself thus; "I had once deep impressions of the importance of religion, and therefore I shall never lose God's favour. I have, perhaps, been acting a little inconsistently, still I hold fast my convictions of the truth of religion. I have never called in question the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints," &c. Instead of being humbled in the sight of God, and seeking pardon of their sins, they continue in them, because grace does abound. This is no mere fancy sketch, my brethren: I remember being once very much struck in

reading an anecdote of Oliver Cromwell, who, while on his death-bed, and awakened to a sense of his estrangement from God, asked his spiritual attendant if he believed a man who was once in grace could ever fall out of it? and the answer he received was, that it was impossible. His spiritual counsellor thus acted very improperly in allowing him to rest his hope upon that belief; I hope he did not rest his hope there, but laid hold of a hope far more secure. Such a way of thinking, my brethren, is by no means uncommon. A man looks back to a period when his thoughts were very different from what they are now; when things unseen and eternal made a deep impression on his mind, and he thinks with himself, "I was religious then, there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, and all must be well with me for ever." But, brethren, a man may be deeply impressed with a sense of religion, and yet not be converted. Religion consists in a radical change of mind and heart. We all recollect the impressive statement relative to the stony ground: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon *with joy receiveth it*. Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while," &c. We ought never to forget that there are many who have exhibited very fair appearances, and yet were not really religious. That a man has at one time been under the influence of religious impressions, and after all falls into sin, and lives in sin, making the matter so much the more alarming. I shall turn your attention to some passages of Scripture upon this point. The first is in the Old Testament, the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, and 24th verse: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned shall he die." The next passage is in the New Testament. Hebrews 6th chapter, and 4th, 5th, and 6th verses: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away; to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." See also the 2d chapter of 2 Peter, and 20th and 21st verses: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Let no man, therefore, deceive himself. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. Let those who may have been deceiving themselves in this manner attend to the word of truth as recorded in the Gospel; let them examine the refuge of lies in which they are placing their confidence, and feel ashamed of the base ingratitude of continuing in sin, while grace does abound.

I have only farther to remark, that the false professor deceives himself, because he still has much pleasure in religious exercises; generally speaking, a man who indulges in sin, and is a slave to any corrupt propensity, ceases to have pleasure in the exercises of religion. It is however true, though strange, that there is a possibility of a person having something like pleasure in religious exercises, although unconverted. He may be affected even to tears while engaged in them; he may feel them not a task but a pleasure, and yet be really far from Christ. Oh! my brethren, how untraceable are some of the windings of the human heart. The false professor takes the same pleasure in religious exercises as in perusing a fictitious narrative; he attends the Church for the same purpose that he attends the theatre. That is the whole of his religion. We know they were an unbelieving generation who came out of Egypt with Moses, and yet what account have we of them? They sought God; they remembered God their Rock; the Most High God, their Redeemer, and yet their hearts were far from him. There is a striking picture of the false professor given in the 58th chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah, and another equally striking in the 33d chapter of Ezekiel, beginning at the 30th verse to the end of the chapter.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES BEGG, M.A., Libberton.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS WHEN ABSENT:

A FAREWELL SERMON TO HIS CONGREGATION AT PAISLEY,

By the Rev. JAMES BEGG, M.A.,
Minister of the Parish of Libberton.

"*And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*"—1 THESS. iii. 12, 13.

WE learn from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles that when Paul preached at Thessalonica, to which he sent this epistle, many of the Jews there believed in Christ, notwithstanding the violent opposition of their countrymen, and "of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." In the spiritual prosperity of these the Apostle continued to feel the deepest interest; for though he passed from city to city, from church to church, proclaiming the everlasting Gospel, and "setting in order," in all the earth, "the things which were wanting," he never forgot those he had left behind. He was a man of large and ardent soul; his thoughts and sympathies were not confined to the Christians of any one city, but embraced the world—men of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. The same feature of character was exhibited by him even before his conversion. The apostle Paul never did any thing by halves. He was open, warm, impetuous. He was a persecutor as well as a Christian—of the front rank a devoted servant to the chief priests and scribes as long as he believed their divine authority. Jerusalem was then too narrow a field for his zeal. To Damascus he went also breathing out threatenings and slaughter against all who opposed what he believed to be the perpetual institutions of God; and after his conversion he was the same ardent and devoted man. The world was the field before him. He felt an interest in all its cities, all its chief places of concourse; wherever souls were to be saved thither he wished to go. He felt himself a debtor to Jew and Greek, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free. And though, like his divine Master, who said, "I must preach the Gospel in other cities also, for therefore am I sent," he passed from land to land; from the river to the ends of the earth, he forgot none of the churches he had left behind. His sympathies only increased and expanded with the multiplicity of objects towards which they were directed; all his feelings were extensive as the globe. Whether at Jerusalem, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or Athens, or Thessalonica; whether by envy and contention, or in meekness and love; if Christ was preached, if idolatry fell, and sin was ashamed; if holiness flourished, and a great harvest of souls was gathered to God; "therein he did rejoice, yea, and would rejoice."

A striking proof of the truth of this you

find in the passage from which our text is taken. We have said already that towards the church which he had planted at Thessalonica, the eyes of the Apostle were continually turned with eager interest. He assures the members of that church, in this chapter, that it was this deep interest which induced him to send Timothy from Athens, that he might "establish them, and comfort them concerning their faith;" and that when he returned and "brought good tidings of their faith and charity," the information was more than a recompense for all his affliction and toil. The news of their spiritual prosperity inspired him with new life even in a distant region, and with a strong desire to see them all again face to face; and till such a consummation could be realized, he utters on their behalf the fervent and beautiful prayer, which forms the subject of our discourse, to that eternal Jehovah who was equally near to both. "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

There are three subjects which require to be considered in discoursing from these words.

I. The Apostle's example ought to induce all Christians and christian ministers to feel an interest in the spiritual prosperity of all the disciples of Christ in the world, and not in that merely of the Christians in their own city. The prayer altogether was uttered by the Apostle in behalf of the Thessalonians when he was at Athens. He had no interest in the Christians of Thessalonica, except the interest which Christianity inspired, and which he felt towards all the churches, and the same ought to be experienced by all Christians. Therefore this is the first lesson from the text.

II. The interest which Christians feel in each other, especially when distant, ought to be expressed by prayer to God, since he and he alone is able to confer all spiritual blessings at all times and in all circumstances. "The *Lord make you* to increase and abound in love: to the end *he* may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father."

III. There are two especial blessings of which the Apostle desired the Thessalonians to become possessors.

1. Love toward one another and all men.

2. A complete triumph over all difficulties, and perfect holiness and glory, "at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

I. The example of the Apostle ought to induce all Christians and christian ministers to feel an interest in the spiritual prosperity of all the Christians in the world, and not merely in that of those in their own city.

There was no doubt a peculiarity in the relation which existed between the apostle Paul and the Thessalonians. He had first carried the tidings of the eternal Gospel to their city, and by his preaching they had been converted to God. He was their spiritual Father, the founder and builder of their church. Therefore he must have looked to them, and they to him, with feelings of love in degree not to be produced by any other combination of causes. To such feelings we find the Apostle often referring throughout his many epistles. But still we must never suppose that this ought to destroy the effect of the example upon us, or that the fact that this deep interest was exhibited by an Apostle ought to confine the lesson to christian ministers, and diminish or destroy its effect in regard to those who have undertaken no such holy calling. Such an idea is, we believe, very natural and prevalent. But we must not suffer our minds to rest on such incidental circumstances. What induced the apostle Paul to forsake his home and kindred, and go forth to convert the world at first, and continue undaunted to prosecute his high design in the midst of a thousand difficulties? This is the question: Why did he visit the city of Thessalonica at all? Why did he continue there in the midst of so much persecution, and send first one messenger, one and a second epistle, and so many prayers to heaven on behalf of the Christians there? Why did he do all this, whilst so many millions of men then alive were utterly unconcerned about the eternal destiny of each other? Could it spring from aught else than that powerful feeling of love to man which ought to be universal, which shall be universal in the second paradise, but for the want of which "the earth has groaned and travailed in pain even until now."

It is of vast importance clearly to understand this subject; for men are so thoroughly leavened and pervaded by selfishness, that they can scarcely understand or believe in the existence of such a thing as disinterest-

edness. This is the deadly venom which has been infused by sin throughout a vast section of the moral family of God, and must be entirely expelled before peace and holiness can reign. Men must be inspired with the feelings which reign in the breasts of angels; the will of God must be done here, as in heaven, before the glory of the latter day can dawn. And if we would only consider what has induced these bright spirits to take any interest at all in the inhabitants of our world; to continue that interest from age to age, since they shouted for joy at the completion of this creation, to continue it even after we had sinned for now nearly six thousand years in all lands and amidst all circumstances, and though men have been despising them all the while, and the glorious Being in whose presence they continually worship; if we consider that they have still rejoiced over every sinner that has repented, and led and comforted every saint, and carried with triumph every departing soul, as they did the soul of Lazarus, to glory; in a word, they are engaged as eagerly in promoting the restoration and eternal glory of fallen man, as if their own eternal glory depended on the issue. And yet they have in it all no selfish interest; for, without doubt, heaven would have remained as bright and full of happiness to them; the smile of Jehovah, which diffuses joy through all that land of the blest, would have been still as gracious to these unfallen sons of the morning; eternity would have been as enduring; sorrow and care as far away from their abodes of endless delight, though none of the posterity of Adam had ever crossed the threshold of heaven. And we ought to go higher still to discover the true nature and origin of the Apostle's feelings. What induces the eternal Jehovah, who has from dateless ages possessed all glory and happiness to create so many worlds and so many intelligent beings capable of enjoying felicity? The universe is his vast dwelling-place; all creatures are his mighty family. to no part of that universe is his goodness confined; for though it shines most gloriously in that inner temple where angels are, and where he is enthroned amidst light inaccessible, yet it breaks forth, and like his nature fills all the earth, and makes all creation to rejoice. If we endeavour to trace the feeling in which all this originates, we will not be able to trace in it the slightest approach to selfishness. If God makes angels blessed, it cannot be because they can increase his glory in return, for to infinity there can be no additions. If he makes his sun to rise and his rain to fall upon men, it is not upon his devoted servants, but upon unnumbered thousands of his open enemies. If he sent his Son to die, it was when the inhabitants of the earth were in open rebellion against him. If he sent his prophets of old to preach, it was to men who stoned and despitefully used them. He sent his Apostles into all cities, though every where bonds and imprisonments awaited them. His whole procedure in heaven, in earth, to angels and men, in all lands and ages, in providence and grace, whilst we live and when we die, is marked by the same disinterested kindness. And it is the very perfection of intelligent creatures to imitate this feature in the divine character. This is what is meant by our being followers of God. This constitutes, in a great measure, the glory of angels, the holiness of prophets and apostles, the high and peculiar excellence of saints.

Apply all this to the case of the apostle Paul now before us. He had no personal objects to secure by visiting Thessalonica at first as a herald of the Gospel, or by continuing to feel and express a deep interest in its inhabitants afterwards. He "coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel; for by the labour of his own hands he ministered to his necessities." And his own eternal salvation would have remained secure, although the Gospel never had been proclaimed within that city. He knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded before he ever preached in Thessalonica, "and that he was able to keep that which he had committed to him against that day." But a new principle had taken possession of his breast, which all the philosophy on earth never could have inspired; for men had never dreamt, till light flashed from heaven, that they ought to love each other without hope of recompense—the poor as well as the rich, the heathen as well as the household of faith, the distant as well as the near, the sinners as well as the holy; but divine love now animated him, and in his journeyings from city to city he exhibited those holy principles which reign in the breasts of all the unfallen and redeemed creatures of God, which reign in the bosom of God himself. And what we wish to impress upon your minds is, that these feelings ought to animate every man who

names the name of Christ in all ages, in all lands. Christian ministers ought no doubt to be leaders of the rest, and ought to exhibit conspicuously these graces of the christian character; but all should breathe the same feelings, and be animated by the same desires, and then will they manifest a zeal and devotedness in the cause of God and of man's salvation, which no gold can purchase, which all the treasures of Arabia never can otherwise secure. It was not because Paul was an Apostle, but because he was a Christian that he uttered these words; not because it was his duty that he prayed for the Thessalonians, but his delight, the burning wish of his inmost soul.

Christianity reverses the whole current of human desire and affection. It dethrones selfishness; it annihilates envy and malice; it fills the soul with love, and a desire to diffuse felicity; it makes man what God designed him to be; for diffusion is the great law of the universe, and reigns wherever it is not interrupted by sin. If we examine all nature, we will find that nothing exists for its own sake alone. The trees which grew in paradise were good for food, and pleasant to the sight. They bore their fruit for the sake of others. And from the glorious sun above, which has been placed in the firmament of heaven, not for its own sake, but that it may give light, and heat, and joy to all the creation of God, as it has done untired for six thousand years, down through all the ranks of created things, to the most minute blade of grass upon which the food treads, and which sustains in being its myriads of imperceptible creatures, diffusion is still the law of the inanimate universe of God. It is the law of angels, for they are ministering spirits to God and to the heirs of salvation. Till he fell, it was the law of Lucifer, and the spirits that sinned with him. Till they fell, it was the law of our first parents in Eden. Since then the spirits of darkness and the race of Adam have stood out as great exceptions to the universal rule, labouring contrary to nature, each to turn all the streams of delight into his own bosom—an attempt which has only ended in wretchedness; for they have been still "like the troubled sea which cannot rest." God has been labouring under two economies to cure the evil in regard to man; the spirits of darkness he hath passed by unheeded. In all Christians he succeeds, and he will continue his divine efforts till the mountains and hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands over a ransomed world.

The considerations by which men are prevented from contributing to each other's temporal enjoyment have no meaning when applied to the diffusion of spiritual blessings. Even in things temporal "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and yet it tendeth to poverty." And when we think that, with God, of spiritual blessings there is enough and to spare for the wants of unnumbered millions of the race of Adam, many mansions, many crowns, many palms, plenteous redemption, fulness of joy, rivers of pleasure, inexhaustible fountains of delight, that men are the stewards of all this felicity—for the treasure is put in earthen vessels—and have received the most ample commission to distribute it all freely amongst their brethren of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; nay, to go out into the highways and hedges, and compel men to come in, that the house of God may be full; when we think of all this, we may well wonder that men should manifest no diligence in inducing each other to partake of such large and free benevolence. It was not so with Paul. He wished all to be saved. The sun was an emblem of that Saviour of whom he was an herald—that sun which shines equally on the cottage of the peasant and the palace of the king, on the inhabitants of barbarous and civilized nations, which has given heat, and light, and joy to unnumbered myriads for ages, and still is as glorious as ever, pursuing his mighty path through the heavens untired, as he will continue to do till, in the still unclouded noontide of his glory, he is arrested in midheaven, by the peal of the archangel's trumpet. The earth, in like manner, on which we tread, has seen many generations; many spring tides have blessed it; many glorious harvests have been reaped from its surface, since first it rose out of the mighty void; and yet, instead of exhausting its mighty stores, its fertility is increasing with the lapse of time. These are but faint emblems of God their creator, and of the exhaustless treasures of his salvation, and if we could clearly see this, we would clearly understand why the apostle Paul directed his christian regards to so many thousand objects. He knew that there was enough for all, for the men of Athens, and Corinth,

and Thessalonica, and a thousand regions. If we understood this, it would break in upon the littleness of our contracted hearts, and make our thoughts and feelings take a wider range, a range at least, as wide as the globe. We seldom think of the Christians beyond our own neighbourhood, our own town, our own congregation, our own island. All our ideas are bound up here, and we wonder that men or angels should look farther. But what are the Christians here assembled, in comparison of the Christians in the other cities, and chief places of concourse, even in this land; what the Christians in all these, and in the many hills and valleys that stretch far in all directions on this land towards the sea, in comparison of those in Europe; what the Christians in Europe, in comparison of the whole human race stretched out in the sight of heaven, and scattered over many islands and continents form pole to pole! We must enlarge our christian sympathies, and expand our christian perceptions, if we would be taught the first important lesson to be learned from this passage of Scripture. But,

II. The Apostle expressed the deep interest which he felt in the Christians at Thessalonica, after he had left them by earnest prayer to God on their behalf.

During his residence at Thessalonica, the Apostle had many other ways by which to express his christian regards. He taught the Christians publicly, and from house to house, and with much effort, and many prayers and tears, he laboured to increase their number and promote their holiness. And who can tell how great the advantage must have been, of having for their teacher such a master in Israel; so stored with all human and sacred learning, so full of heavenly skill and tender sympathy, and burning zeal, and powerful arresting eloquence. Such an Apostle could not fail to be strongly beloved. Hence he tells us that the members of one church would have taken out their own eyes if he could thereby be benefited. And the elders of Ephesus all wept sore, and fell upon Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words that he spake, that they should see his face no more!

But though all these advantages were lost for ever to the church of Thessalonica, his interest in their spiritual prosperity continued undiminished; and he had still a method by which to express it more powerful than all the rest. All eloquence was vain without the power of God; with that power the feeblest means would be effectual. And he knew, that far as they were from him, God was equally near to both, since he pervades all space—fills all temples—hears all prayers in all languages—supports in existence, and crowns with success, all means of grace; and in answer to prayer, protects, comforts, sanctifies, raises to immortal glory all his children, throughout the wide regions of the earth.

There is in the prayer of the Apostle a recognition of the doctrine of the Trinity. Without keeping this in view, some may imagine that the language of the Apostle contains unnecessary repetitions. "The Lord," to whom he first refers, is undoubtedly the holy Spirit, whose express office it is to shed abroad and increase love in the hearts of men. He alone, of the sacred Three which bear record in heaven, performs this mighty work under the economy of redemption, and shall at length present all Christians in heaven "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" and therefore for His influences on their own behalf, and on behalf of others, ought all men to pray, as did the Apostle in the words before us. But "God the Father," as here referred to, is still upon the throne, even as Pharaoh was still upon the throne of Egypt, when Joseph ruled the land. He is the avenger of the broken law, and to him the whole redeemed children of Christ, numerous as the drops of dew in the morning, shall at length be presented with exceeding joy. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, is the anointed Judge, as well as the merciful Saviour, who shall come in the clouds at length in his own glory, and in his Father's glory, with all his saints and angels. To each of these the Apostle makes distinct reference in the passage before us, distinguishing clearly their several offices, and therefore here was no approach to vain repetition. Even as the high priest of old spoke no vain words when thrice, as from three persons, he blessed the children of Israel, saying, "the Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace;" even as it was no vain thing for all the apostles to pronounce benedictions in the names of each of the sacred Trinity; even as it is no vain thing to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;—so it was no vain thing for the Apostle in his

prayer, to refer to the several offices of the Three which bear record in heaven. It was fitted to impress upon the minds of the Thessalonians, and upon ours, this great fundamental truth of Scripture, since it is thus interwoven everywhere, with the whole texture of revelation.

The Apostle, above all things, recognises the absolute necessity of divine influence to give effect to all his labours, and permanence and triumph to their Christianity. Without this, he knew that their love would wax cold, and their righteousness, like the morning cloud and early dew, vanish away. Whilst, if God's spirit would descend like rain upon the mown grass, and like showers which water the earth, not merely would the seed which he had sown take deeper root, reviving as the corn, growing as the vine, but it would shake its seeds abroad, and the wilderness of heathenism around would become a fruitful field; the fruitful field would be accounted for a forest to the Lord: it would be for a name and an everlasting sign which would not be cut off.

There is no truth more frequently asserted in scripture, than that all spiritual prosperity proceeds from the agency of the Spirit of God; all spiritual decay from the withdrawal of the influences of that spirit, leaving men to their own evil passions, and the power of Satan. On the one hand, if Noah's preaching was unavailing, it was because God's Spirit had ceased to strive. If Pharaoh would not let the Jews depart, it was because "God hardened his heart." If the Jews would not believe in the wilderness, it was because "God had not given them eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor a heart to understand, until that day." If the Jews did not see the glory of Christ, and the truths which he proclaimed, it was because "God had hid these things from the wise and prudent, revealing them unto babes; and the spirit was not then given, for the Son of Man was not then glorified. If the apostle's Gospel was ever hid, it was hid unto the lost, whom the god of this world hac blinded, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of the grace of God should shine unto them." If the whole race of Jews, down to this hour, though they weep as strangers in all the earth, and sigh for the time when their Messiah shall come; if even with the word of God in their hands, they cannot see that the Shiloh must have come, and that it is vain for them to look for another, it is because there is a veil of darkness upon their eyes, when they read Moses unto this day. On the other hand, if Samuel was holy, it was because God had sanctified him from the womb. If Isaiah preached with power, it was because the arm of the Lord was revealed; if Lydia believed, it was because the Lord opened her heart; if thousands were converted on the day of Pentecost, it was because the spirit filled all the place where they were met, fulfilling the promise of God by Joel, "I will pour out of my Spirit, upon all flesh;" if Christian churches revive, it is because a time of refreshing has come from the presence of the Lord; if the glory of the latter day shall come, it is because God will remove all obstacles, bringing down mountains, raising up valleys, making crooked places straight, and rough places smooth; making nations to be born at once, and all flesh at once to see the salvation of God.

The whole progress of a sinner towards everlasting glory, is spoken of in Scripture as depending entirely on the grace and power of God. Preaching the Gospel is undoubtedly essential, and the labours of Paul, or some other christian minister could, by no means have been dispensed with at Thessalonica. "For how could they have believed in him of whom they had not heard, or how could they have heard without a preacher." But still, if any believed, that "faith was not of themselves, it was the gift of God." If any were justified, it was "freely by the grace of God through the redemption which was in Christ." If any were renewed in the spirit of their minds, it was not by works of righteousness which they did, or the efforts of any Apostles, but "according to God's mercy he saved them, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." If any of them loved God, it was because that love had been shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Spirit given to them. If any of them overcame death, it was because God gave them the victory. If any took possession of eternal life, that was the gift of God. The Apostle well knew and thoroughly believed all this; that the beginning, the stability, the progress, the eternal perfection of the christian character of the Thessalonian converts, depended entirely upon God; and therefore he uttered this fervent prayer. He knew that the lips and the heart with which they uttered praise were derived from him; that they could not see unless he opened their eyes; nor feel

and act with energy unless he inspired it. He knew that he might cry as in the valley of dry bones; that a thousand prophets might cry in vain, if God departed, "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" The very life that had begun to animate them, would go out; they would all again become silent as the grave; till the Spirit of God came from the four winds and breathed upon them, and then a rustling would be heard, bone would unite to bone, flesh and skin would cover the whole; they would stand up in completeness and beauty, a moving, breathing, glorious array, to praise the living God!

All the figures employed in Scripture to represent the office of a christian minister, are coupled with statements strongly proclaiming the inefficiency of mere human effort. They are *watchmen* on the walls of Zion, looking abroad over the earth and sky, descrying the danger, and warning the flock; but "unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain." They are *builders* erecting a glorious spiritual house to God, framed of living stones, the foundation of which was laid of old in Zion; above were built the patriarchs, then the prophets, then the Apostles and first Christians; and the building has been gradually rising and becoming more glorious from age to age, till at length the topstone of it shall be brought out amidst shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it;" but unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it. They are spiritual *merchants;* they invite men to purchase the pearl of great price, to buy wine and milk without money and without price; they cast their bread upon the waters, in hopes of finding it after many days;—but as the merchant can only wait with patience the result of all his toils; cannot command the market he desires, or control the winds and rule in the raging of the sea; but can only set forth his merchandise and wait the result, trim his vessel and set his sails, and look anxiously to heaven for a favourable breeze to waft it to a foreign shore, and follow it with prayer, that the result may be good; so the christian minister can set forth the treasures of eternal salvation in their most inviting aspect, and employ all the means which God has prescribed, and still he can go no farther, but look to heaven and pray that a return of a thousand fold may crown his toils. They are *soldiers* fighting in the van against spirits of sin and darkness, embodied and disembodied; but in the very hour of conflict, power, unless imparted from on high, may cease to nerve the warrior's arm. Or at best, all their arrows are shot at a venture, and must be conveyed by some secret power to the heart of the foe; or in some sudden panic, which no philosophy can explain, one may chase a thousand, and put ten thousand to flight; for God alone musters the hosts to battle, and can command the victory, making those whom he favours more than conquerors. They are *shepherds;* but the flock will be scattered in the cloudy and dark day, unless he who is above all, gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom; leading them by green pastures and still waters for his own name's sake. They are *husbandmen* cultivating a stubborn and barren soil. The husbandman breaks up the ground, and casts in his seed; but more he cannot do. He cannot command the sun to shine, the rain to descend in gentle showers, or stay again, when the earth is overcharged, the clouds of heaven. And in defiance of all his care, some will fall by the wayside, and the fowls of the air will come and gather it up; and some will fall on stony places and spring up, but be scorched and die with the first out-breaking of the meridian sun. Some will fall amongst thorns, and the thorns will grow up and choke it; and none will grow unless God cause his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, and the secret influence to be exerted, by which the earth shall bring forth an abundant harvest. All this figurative language, I say, still resolves itself into a strong assertion of the truth upon which the Apostle proceeded in the text, viz., that God alone could sanctify and make perfect the Thessalonians, not his efforts or eloquence. Men may trust in the power of fellow-mortals to bend the stubborn spirit of man, and may imagine most foolishly that only the preaching of a few favourite ministers can at all profit them: or, like the savages of old, they may look to the stars, or to the various methods which human ingenuity has devised; but there is no virtue in all these. In the minerals of earth, in all her thousand hills, in all the herbs of her wide spread gardens there is none; and yet as much in these, as in the mere sound of human eloquence, which passes away like a tale that hath been told. The lovely song has charmed the sinner's ear, but all the while he has sealed up every avenue to his heart, which remains cold and hard like the

nether millstone, steeled against the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. But Omnipotence can make way through all opposition—bind and cast out every spirit of evil—fill and animate with holy love all the feelings of the soul, and carry all Christians through armies of difficulties to the regions of eternal joy. "But for all this will he be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Therefore the Apostle uttered this fervent prayer, and it is our duty to imitate his example. For the churches of other lands—for our christian friends wherever they be; in the wilderness, on the stormy sea, in the crowded city full of many temptations, in youth full of passion, in old age full of peevishness, and many gathering alarms; our cry should ascend and enter the ears of the God of Sabaoth, that God may make them to increase and abound in love, and stablish their hearts unblameably, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. This is the third subject which demands consideration, viz., the two-fold prayer of the Apostle; first, That the Thessalonians might abound in love to each other, and all men, as he did towards them. Second, That they might be stablished in holiness, and presented blameless at the coming of Jesus Christ.

It has been the great object of God, under both economies, to inspire the hearts of men with love towards each other. Under the Old Testament dispensation, the Jews were intended to be a kind and holy brotherhood, an emblem of what the whole human race should have been. In the wilderness they were equally fed with manna, and made to drink water from the rock, and then there was no poor man amidst all the ranks of Israel. And when they were ushered at length into that goodly Canaan, which had been swept of its inhabitants, that they might take possession, God commanded them still to leave the corners of their fields unreaped, and their grapes ungleaned, and every seventh year the silver trumpets announced the return of jubilee, and every yoke was broken, every slave set free, and the whole produce of that large and fertile country was left free to all. By many such commandments did God teach lessons of brotherly kindness to the Jews. And when Christ Jesus appeared as the great Prophet of the Church,—the desire of nations, for whose law the isles were to wait,—the great lesson which he taught his disciples, was, that they should love one another, as the means by which they might secure the happiness of earth, which always had secured the happiness of heaven. This is the meaning of the apostle John's paradox: "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." It was an old commandment; for it was the law of paradise, of heaven, of Moses, of all the servants of God, and had stood from everlasting ages, being based on unchangeable rectitude. But it was a new commandment; for it was recovered, as it were, from amidst the ruins of human nature, amidst which it had been buried, and was destined *anew* to be written on every christian temple, on every christian heart; it was now also enforced by new and wonderful arguments, by an amazing example—the example of the eternal Son of God himself.

Love toward each other and all men had been given by Christ as the grand visible mark of his disciples. The Pharisees were known by the breadth of their phylacteries, the length of their prayers; the priests, by their sacred vestments; but hereby were all men to know Christ's disciples by their love one toward another. Therefore the Apostle earnestly desired the Thessalonians to grow in the possession and exhibition of this heavenly grace, as necessary to their own happiness, to the success and extension of their Church, to their meetness for the eternal joys of the sanctuary above, and mingling with the blessed company of angels when they died.

(After making some remarks on the Apostle's love to the Thessalonians, as extending to sinners as well as to saints; on the nature, efficacy, extent, increase, and eternal endurance of love, as the very crowning and perfection of the christian character, the discourse proceeded to the second part of the Apostle's prayer.)

The day of Christ's appearance is the object towards which christian ministers and people are required continually to look. If they have talents to occupy, it is "till Christ come;" if sacraments to observe, it is "till Christ come;" if duties to discharge with vigour, whilst it is day, it is "because when Christ comes they shall receive the

reward of deeds done in this body, according to what they have done, whether good or bad." The day of Christ's coming, is the day of expectation to the sons of God, of terror to his enemies: for then this economy shall be completed, this earth burnt up; these heavens removed, the destinies of all irrevocably fixed. And victory, complete eternal victory in the day when Christ cometh with all his saints, should alone satisfy the disciples of Christ. All pretensions to religion, short of this, will only end in more thorough shame. Better never to have known the way of truth, than after ye have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you. Better to die in Egypt than, after having come out and passed the Red Sea, and seen the wonders of God in the wilderness, to be left there, still far from Canaan, monuments of the eternal indignation of God. Better to perish in Sodom than, after having clean escaped, to stand a pillar of salt in the desert, an illustration of danger to all succeeding ages. Better not to reach the gate of heaven, than to perish at the threshold. And, O, it is an alarming truth to all christian ministers, that thousands begin in the spirit and end in the flesh! The leaves of the fig-tree are fair, but when you go seeking fruit, none can be found; it is nigh unto cursing, its end is to be burned. And, therefore, the very first and most important thing for us all to know, is the actual position which we occupy, our actual danger, the number and power of our spiritual enemies. Humility will usher into glory; God fills the hungry, scatters the proud, blesses the poor in spirit. Rich men must not, therefore, glory in their riches, mighty men in their might, wise men in their wisdom; as if by the application of these in securing human means, they could perfect their eternal salvation. Such feelings will lead them quite astray, and form the very vantage ground from which Satan will attack successfully. We must trust only in the midst of all our efforts, to the eternal God, through Jesus Christ, who can give us all things richly to enjoy; and walk humbly and circumspectly, esteeming others more than ourselves, choosing a low room at this christian feast; and then when the Master comes to see the guests he will say "Friend sit up higher," ye shall have honour before the saints. Descend to the ground and ye shall rise above the clouds. Paul was brought down to the dust, and thoroughly abashed, and then he could contend with principalities, and bear without alarm witness to the name of Christ before kings. And so it will always be. The man who is most perfectly diffident of his own strength and attainments, will rise to the highest glory in heaven, where all cast their crowns at the feet of him who sits on the throne, and to no higher excellence can any Christian attain, than to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh.

The reason of all this is plain. The whole progress of religion within us is in opposition to the tendencies of our nature, and therefore in its aid we must never trust. It is rather an enemy to be watched and resisted. Nature is dead in sin; Christianity is dead to sin. Nature is to every truly good work reprobate; Christianity is to every good work zealous. Nature teaches us to love ourselves; Christianity teaches to deny ourselves. Nature teaches us to seek exclusively our own profit; Christianity to seek the profit of others. Nature regards preaching as folly; Christianity as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Nature regards faith, and hope, and love, all the graces of the Spirit as unnecessary mysteries; Christianity regards them as her very essence, her life, her beauty, her perfection, without which she is dead, being alone. In a word the whole progress of Christians to eternal glory, is secured by divine power, guiding and directing the whole current of human wish and feeling; and, therefore, to that power our eyes should continually be turned, and it should be humbly—reverently recognised.

And yet we must never stand still, that we may idly speculate. We should actively and constantly exert ourselves in subduing every evil feeling, and in training ourselves for the immortal joys of heaven, as if all the power rested with ourselves. It is this union which constitutes prosperous Christianity. If we overcome all our enemies here below, there will be a long eternity above, which may be employed in meditation as to the more minute causes by which that victory was obtained. But meantime, flesh and blood, principalities and powers, are up in arms against us. We must arise and contend, never ceasing till every enemy has left the field, else we shall not obtain the prize. We have lost paradise; but we must struggle now, else we shall be driven to a lower depth. The contention now is for all that we have—for peace of mind—

for eternity—for all. If the battle is gained, the gain is infinite, unspeakable, everlasting; and as heaven spreads before us, with its endless, changeless joys, it may well brace up our spirits to the encounter. If it is lost, all is lost—hopelessly lost for ever.

This great struggle has been going forward, in the case of every individual Christian, since the world began; and victory, or utter hopeless defeat, are the only two results in which it can terminate. To stir you up to vigour, and equip you for this mighty conflict, all Sabbaths have been set apart, and all means of grace instituted; and when Satan would persuade you that on such days nothing should be done—that they are days of relaxation and thoughtlessness merely after a week of toil; and that praying, and reading, and meditating, waiting at wisdom's gates—watching at the porches of her doors, are quite unnecessary, you should remember that these are the most important exercises in which you can engage. These are all employed by the great Captain of your Salvation, as means to secure your eternal victory. They are wells in the desert, from which with joy ye may draw water—heavenly armouries, out of which ye may be supplied with immortal weapons, wherewith to quench all the fiery darts of Satan. Therefore, if ye would be presented perfect in holiness, watch at wisdom's gates, wait at the porches of her doors. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. "If, my son, thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou searchest for her as silver, as for hid treasures;" to obtain which men penetrate into the depths of the earth, piercing the rocks which intervene, eagerly following every vein of precious ore, then shalt thou obtain a saving, sanctifying, glorifying knowledge of God.

Our Saviour once proclaimed under the canopy of heaven, and in the hearing of a godless generation, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; and from the midst of the golden candlesticks, seven times did he repeat the same proclamation. It may be applied to all Christians, and to all the gifts of God. He that hath *eyes* to see, let him behold the thousand imperfections which still cleave to his character—that hath a *memory* to remember, and an understanding to consider, let him remember and consider how much still remains to be done; let him remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, the duration of eternal glory—he that hath *hands*, let him work with all his might; for there is no work, or device, or knowledge in the grave. Time waits for no man. The sun no longer stands still in the firmament, and the day is already far spent. The shadow on the dial will not go backward, that we may recover any lost opportunity. No day, no Sabbath past, can ever be again recalled; we shall see it again no more, though we seek it carefully with tears.

The time of Christ's coming draweth nigh: he shall rend the heavens, and appear; every eye shall see him, every soul in this assembly shall hear his voice; for his voice shall pronounce the doom of all. Be ye faithful unto death. He will give you a crown of life. Even now, the whole court of heaven waits for your complete salvation; saints long for your coming; angels blush when you fall, and fill all heaven with melody when you triumph. Christ himself stands amidst them all, on the high battlements of heaven, ready to receive his triumphant sons. When the soldier of many battles, who has gone forth from his native land, and by driving with confusion all enemies from the gate, has won high renown, returns again to the city of his fathers, where all his kinsmen dwell; the damsels sing hymns of triumph, and weave garlands of victory, and strew with flowers the warrior's path, and fill the air with clouds of sweet perfume—songs are written, and monuments are raised, to hand down to all ages the memory of the achievement. And even so when any christian disciple, who hath been sent out into this region of war, and hath come off victorious, escaping every danger, spoiling every foe, trampling under foot the very last enemy, in the sight of heaven, earth, men, and angels; all heaven's inhabitants are out to meet him at his coming; the long white robes of glory, and palms of eternal victory, are brought forth from the treasurehouse of God; a new pillar is set up in the temple of God, which shall stand as a monument of the victory throughout ceaseless ages.

O then be strong, and very courageous, ye followers of the Lamb. Ye do not contend alone; ye have many companions. Thousands of thousands have never bowed the knee to Baal. Cast your eyes abroad; see how many are around you—how many at your side. All feel an interest in your toils, all shall share your triumph. See how many have arrived beyond the reach

of wo; their toils are past—their victory is gained—they never return any more to the field of danger. One short struggle, and all is over for ever. See how many angels are near you with their chariots of fire, and horses of fire, to guard you in life—to defend you in death—to carry you triumphantly to the realms above. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" A whole universe calls upon you to be up and doing. Time flying—eternity approaching—judgment preparing—God entreating—Christ longing to introduce you into eternal joy—a thousand inducements present themselves on every hand. Hold fast that which ye have; let no man take your crown, and your hopes shall brighten, even whilst the sun grows dim with years; and upon the ruins of a world, and amidst the gathering majesty for a judgment day, ye shall say, "This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.

(In conclusion, Mr. Begg referred to the fact, that he would no more for ever preach any sermons to that congregation, as its minister; and to the solemnity of that consideration, both to him and them, since now the day of judgment was nearer than when they first met, he vindicated, at some length, the propriety of the course he had pursued in leaving them; and he defied them all to say, that he had not devoted, when amongst them, though he was sensible of many imperfections, all his substance, as well as time, to the advancement of their best interests, in connexion with the church of which he was a minister: he trusted that, wherever he went, he would continue to do the same. In preaching, he had laboured to expound the Scriptures in *Scripture language* and by *Scriptural* illustrations; that had ever been his highest object, as he thought it ought to be the object of all christian ministers. In the duties of his parish, he had laboured to increase pastors and teachers, and elders, and libraries; and he trusted his successor would do the same, till the parish was divided into at least five, and thoroughly pervaded with christian agency. He knew that many things had been neglected, and he trusted that God would forgive all the sins into which he had fallen. He returned thanks to all who had treated him kindly, amidst his labours, and many such there were; and if any had laboured to discover faults, he trusted that in his successor they would find a far more devoted and ardent minister. "Finally," said he, "brethren, farewell. The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord shine upon you with the light of his countenance, and give you everlasting peace.") *During this concluding address, the congregation which was much crowded, seemed deeply affected.*

"THE ANGEL AND THE SPIRIT."

CRITICISM scarcely comes within the scope of the limits of the SCOTTISH PULPIT; we have, however, been so much delighted by the perusal of the *brochure*, whose title we have given above, that we cannot refrain from introducing it to the notice of our readers. It is one of the most exquisitely beautiful poems that we have ever fallen in with. The author of it must be a man of true genius, and need not have been ashamed to have added his name to the title page.

Angel. I come from Heaven's immortal sanctuary
To visit thee, freed spirit, whom I oft
Have hovered o'er in dreams, while yet thou wert
Imprisoned in thy tenement of clay.
Come, chosen one, companion of the blest,
And wing thy way to yonder happy gate
That opens to receive thee: follow me,
Ethereal being, through the elements!
Beloved of thy Maker! follow me
To regions brighter than the noontide sun,
More beautiful than Paradise, when Eve
Bloomed in the garden as its fairest flower;—
Harmonious more than when the nightingale,
Which ever chanted there, called forth at even
His choir of singers, and poured out a strain
Of music, all but heavenly;—more divine
With odour than the rose of Lebanon,
Or than the lily, shedding its perfume
On Carmel's wreath girt side—what time the morn
Awakens from the flowers ambrosial balm.
More fair than all dominions of the Earth,
Or all the palaces of sceptred kings.
Bright spirit! to this mansion, follow me.

Spirit. Awakened from the poppied sleep of death,
Which sealed mine eyelids, and threw over me
The veil of blank forgetfulness, I now
From the dark sepulchre have just arisen,

To fresh existence and immortal light.
I feel as if I dwelt in the creation
Of a mysterious dream—all seems enchantment,
And to my fancy I am but a dreamer,—
Where is the Earth I once inhabited,
Its mountains, vales, and streams, and populous cities,
O! gentle guardian angel, where are they?

Angel. Think not of them, for they are of the past—
The perishable; and the grave its gates
Hath placed 'twixt thee and them. Let them away
From memory vanish, like a summer cloud.
Thy home shall be in Heaven, that happy land,
Whose meanest subject is more glorious far
Than all the titled monarchs of the Earth;
Whose weakest can control the elements,
And ride as on the whirlwind as a steed;
Whose most imperfect is too full of purity
For man to set his dazzled eyes upon.
In snow-white robes, around the throne of God,
All sorrow banished from their sinless hearts,
The emerald vales of heaven, and shining hills,
They fill with echo of their Maker's name.
Love, Faith, Hope, Charity, each has its place
In this most blessed land, and shall reward
All such as have, like thee, looked up to them,
And been, as thou wert, when they dwelt on Earth.

Spirit. Yet difficult it is to draw the thoughts,
First bounded by the transitory views
And passing things of earth, at once away
Entirely from them. Whatsoe'er was known
Was hoped for, or was doated on, abode
There—and beyond it, only in the eye
Of Faith, was pictured out the blessed scenes
Which now, with new-born ecstasy and awe,
I gaze on, marvelling. Therefore 'tis that I,
With momentary longing would revert
To what hath been within the realms of Time,
Ere entering on Eternity.

Angel. One glimpse
—And not for such do I upbraid thee now
Take of the map whereon thy pilgrimage
Of mortal life was journeyed—but one glimpse—
Nor with the haze which rises up from earth
Bedim the crystal atmosphere of Heaven.
Gaze downward through yon gates of chrysolite,
Fire-circled, and the distance dissipates,—
All intervening darkness melt away,—
The shade of moons, and stars, and devious orbs;
And Space has no remoteness. Through that vista
Gaze downwards, and in yonder line of blue
Behold the stream, upon whose flowery banks
Thine years of childhood glided like its waters,—
Seest thou it not?

Spirit. My cottage home I see,
'Mid the bright beauty of its garden flowers,—
The circling trees beneath whose summer boughs
It was so sweet to saunter, when the sea
Sang to the fanning west-wind, or the star
Of evening glorified the gorgeous west;
The lake across whose mirror oft the pinnace
Passed like a passing dream,—I see it all.
O! still-loved scenes of my nativity,
Hail and farewell! Yet for a moment longer
Permit a thought to things more dear than those,
My kindred let me see; my widowed wife,
And orphaned little one; and let me send
A blessing on earth's weary sojourners.

At some future opportunity, when space permits, we may probably resume our extracts from this splendid production.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT MACNAIR, Paisley.
SERMON by the Rev. R. WILSON, Greenock.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE 23D MARCH, AT THE OPENING OF LEVERN CHAPEL, IN THE ABBEY PARISH OF PAISLEY,

By the Rev ROBERT MACNAIR,
One of the Ministers of that Parish.

"*We will go into his tabernacles; we will worship at his footstool.*"—Ps. cxxxii. 7.

To the priests under the Old Testament dispensation, God said, by his servant Moses, "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children which have not known any thing may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." To Christians, under the New Testament dispensation, the same God, by means of an Apostle, has given the injunction, not to forsake "the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is." Such is the command of the Almighty, and it becomes us, in obedience to this command, to resolve with the pious Psalmist, to "go into God's tabernacles," and to "worship at his footstool." To induce us to form this resolution, and to keep it, nothing farther should be necessary, than to have the Word of God laid before us, commanding or authorizing us thus to act. At the same time, it must not be disguised, that there are many who consider themselves as Christians, who live regardless of the important duty of the sanctuary. To them, the Sabbath of the Lord is a weariness, the service of his house an irksome toil. They forsake "the assembling of themselves together;" they will not "come and appear before God." Would to Heaven that such could be brought to see the error of their conduct, and to form the resolution expressed in the text. With the view of correcting their mistaken views, and of inducing them to do so, we have chosen, looking up to God for his blessing, to discourse for a little on the importance of public worship: and we trust that this subject, should the attempt to reach the consciences of the careless be vain, may not prove altogether useless to the regular and well-disposed part of our audience, but may be a mean of encouraging them to persevere in their laudable conduct.

We would simply state, on entering upon the subject of this discourse, that the purposes for which we assemble in the courts of the Lord, are, to praise and adore his perfections, to acknowledge his goodness, to confess our sins, to pray for pardon and assistance, and to receive instruction in the great truths of our holy religion. Now, when we speak of the importance of public worship, we speak of the importance of all these purposes. To show the importance of it, then, it might be sufficient to remember it is a commanded duty. For every

command of Heaven, even the least, is important, and there is danger in neglecting it, as this neglect exposes us to the just indignation of a righteous God, and the awful effects of his displeasure. But, in order to show the importance of attendance on the public worship of God, we propose at present to dwell for a little, on its reasonableness, and the advantages attending it.

I. Our first object is, to endeavour to point out the reasonableness of attendance on the public worship of God. That God ought to be worshipped, must be acknowledged by every one who believes in his existence and perfections. He, who is "God over all, and blessed for ever," ought certainly to be adored as such. He, who is "kind unto all," and whose "tender mercies are over all his works," ought to have a tribute of gratitude ascribed to him. He, against whom we have sinned, should witness the humble confessions of his children. He, on whom we depend for every blessing, both temporal and spiritual, for our daily bread, for mercy to pardon, and grace to help in time of need, should be inquired at for all these things. He, whose character is a great deep, but of whom it is of consequence for us to have knowledge, should be the subject of our study, and the means of acquainting ourselves with his character, should never be neglected or overlooked. He, whom it becomes us to serve, but of our duty to whom, we are comparatively ignorant, ought to witness his creatures assiduous in inquiring after their duty, and in learning his will. Now, we ask, how are all these things to be done? Some may, perhaps, imagine they may be done by private as well as by public worship, as it is the homage of the heart which God delights in. It is true that God is a spirit, and they that worship him, should worship him in spirit and in truth. It is true, that private worship should be regularly observed; and it is true, that without the homage of the heart, no external ceremony can be of any avail. But still, it is surely reasonable, that our feelings should be expressed in words, and that these words should not be uttered in secret alone. Has God gifted us with the power of speech, and should not this faculty be employed in the worship of the giver? Has he blessed us with social capacities, and should we not return his kindness by meeting in these capacities, for the purpose of promoting his glory? Is it not regarded as greater honour to even an earthly benefactor, and a stronger proof of our attachment to him, to speak his praise to others, than simply to confine this feeling to our own bosoms? Would there not be something blameable in the conduct of that man, who never acknowledged to others the favours of a friend, when fit opportunities occurred? In like manner do we testify our love and gratitude to God, by public expressions of worship to him, while we incur blame by neglecting the opportunities that offer for this purpose. Nor ought it to be overlooked, that the honour of God should be promoted, by every mean in our power, and surely none will deny that his glory is more likely to be advanced by public than by private worship; that his name is more likely to be heard of in the world, and his fame to be spread throughout the earth. Besides, there are certain blessings we receive of a public nature, and which, therefore, require a public acknowledgment. There are certain crimes of a public nature, and which, therefore, ought to receive a public confession. There are certain wants which we need supplied, of a public description, and the supply of which ought, therefore, to be petitioned for, in our public capacity. While, then, family blessings should be acknowledged in the family circle, we ought to meet in our public and social capacity, to confess our common crimes, to acknowledge our common mercies, to implore the supply of our common wants. We might mention also, the dignity of the employment, as an additional consideration, which shows its reasonableness. As the mind is more noble than the body, so the exercises of the former are of a more exalted nature than those of the latter: as angels are more exalted beings than men, so the nearer our employments approach to theirs, the more dignified must they be considered. Now, surely, it must be the part of a rational creature, to prefer the more dignified employment to that which is of a grovelling nature. It is the part of a reasonable being to prefer the more spiritual exercises, the services of angels, to those merely corporeal, to those of mortality. You will easily perceive the application of these remarks, to the services of the sanctuary. In the sanctuary, they who worship God aright, worship him in spirit and in truth. There, our exercises are not unsimilar to those of the first-born sons of Heaven, who are represented as standing before the eternal throne, veiling their faces with their wings, and saying,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." And now, were we to add any thing to this branch of the subject, we would refer you to the example of mankind in all ages and in all nations, from the remotest antiquity, down to the age in which we live; from the rudest of the American tribes, to the most civilized of European nations. We admit that men have often erred in their opinions of the nature of God, and the mode of his worship. Still, however, the existence of their temples and their altars, shows the principle to be deeply rooted in the heart of man, and the feeling to be coeval with his nature. So much, then, for the reasonableness of this duty.

II. Let us now direct your attention, for a little, to the advantages resulting from attendance on the house of God.

We begin with observing, that God regards with delight his humble worshippers. This consideration, indeed, applies to the worshippers of God in general, whether their service be of a more public or more private nature: but it seems particularly applicable to those who engage in his *public* worship. The sanctuary under the Old Testament dispensation, is pointed out to us as the place of God's more immediate presence. In it we are told was his dwelling place, and there did he manifest his glory. He is said to have loved "the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," and his train is said to have "filled the temple." From such expressions we may conclude, he was pleased with the conduct of those who assembled in his tabernacles to worship in his presence; and the same God has promised to his people, under the New Testament dispensation, that "wherever two or three meet together in his name," he will be "in the midst of them to bless them, and to do them good." Now, if the enjoyment of the friendship of God be of any avail, it must be good to wait upon God in his ordinances. If to possess the friendship of God, to have him regarding us "with a pleasant countenance," be of any benefit to our souls, let us not forget to assemble ourselves in the house of our God.

Again, this duty is full of the most rational delight to the soul of man. We are aware, brethren, there are many who count the Sabbath of the Lord a weariness, and rejoice when it comes to a close; there are many who regard the service of God's house an irksome toil, and feel happy as it draws to a termination. But these are not the true worshippers of the Almighty, but persons whose hearts are wandering on the mountains of vanity, while their bodies are in the house of prayer. The true servants of God call the Sabbath 'a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable." Their chief happiness upon earth, is to engage in his service, and to worship in his house. How often do we find the pious Psalmist expressing his delight in the house of his God, and when deprived of its worship, eagerly desiring it, and panting after it, like the hart after the water brooks. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." "In the congregations will I bless the Lord." "I went to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day." "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." Nor need we wonder at the delight which is experienced by the true worshippers, in the temple of Jehovah, if we consider for a moment, how they are employed. Their delight may arise, from the simple consideration, that they are engaged in the noblest exercise under heaven; and that when so engaged, they are enjoying the favour and friendship of the Most High. The service itself, also, must elevate the soul, and fill it with the most pleasing emotions. What can be more delightful than to engage in the praises of him whom we revere and love? what exercise more pleasant, than to pour out our hearts to that Almighty Parent who loves us, and delights in doing us good? what more engaging, than to speak and to hear of the perfections of Deity, of the condescending love of the Saviour, of the blessedness of the celestial paradise, of the glories of futurity, and of the road which conducts to eternal felicity?

But, besides all, there is to be expected a feeling of satisfaction and delight, arising from the immediate presence of God with his people, in his worship. This is especially the case, in the more solemn duty of the

sanctuary, when his people are engaged in showing forth the death of their Lord. Then, is their Saviour made known to them in the breaking of bread, while their elevated affections burn within them. But this effect may be expected to be partially, at least, produced by the ordinary services of the temple, when these are engaged in, from pious and conscientious motives. "The goings" of the Almighty are said to be "seen in the sanctuary;" and, we may rest assured, he will fulfil the promise of his presence, when two or three meet together in his name. But who can estimate the import of this promise, but those who are regular in their attention to this duty, and who are blessed with the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

Farther, we mention the improvement of our own conduct in general, as another advantage arising from proper attention to this duty. Public worship is not only an important duty in itself, but it has a tendency to excite us to the more faithful discharge of duty in general, to improve the various graces of the christian life. Nothing can be more obvious, than that those who are addicted to open crime, were they to come to the house of God, would at least have less leisure for their indulgence in iniquity; for, besides, that a portion of their time would thus be occupied, we can scarcely imagine that they would at once retire from the house of God to the practice of open iniquity: and who knows what impressions might be made on their hearts, by all that they might there see and hear? Impressions thus repeated, day after day, might at last prove efficacious. The Lord might open their hearts to attend to the things belonging to their peace. The view of the faithful worshippers of God, might fill their hearts with awe; the reasoning "about righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," might cause them to tremble; the Saviour might meet them by his grace; and although they came with little better intention than "to scoff," they might be constrained "to remain to pray."

But while this effect may sometimes be produced, we would speak particularly of the benefits to be derived from this duty, by those who engage in it, from a desire of improvement. Instruction, you know, is one of the ends of our assembling ourselves together. The great mass of mankind are so much engaged in worldly affairs, that little time is left for improvement in religion. Individuals are set apart for the purpose of instructing mankind in its duties. Their time and attention are more particularly directed to this subject, and the result of their labours it is their part to communicate from the pulpit. The character of Deity, and the nature of duty, become thus better known to mankind, than if each individual were left to acquire information from his own private researches; and, it is to be expected, that in proportion to our advancements in knowledge, will be our attainments in righteousness. Some may, perhaps, regard this as a reason for the ignorant to attend the ordinances of God, but think that it cannot operate upon those who are already wiser than their teachers, and stand not in need of any lessons from them. But allowing their wisdom, ought they not, by their example, to countenance a useful institution, and thus promote the benefit of others, and that even should they themselves be beyond the reach of instruction?

But, brethren, it is not by the acquirement of something new alone, that our graces are to be improved. We have need of being reminded, of what we have already learned, our duties have to be recalled to our attention, and the motives to their performance again and again enforced, before we set about their practice. It is not always the minister of the greatest talent, or the greatest eloquence, who proves most useful in the church of Christ. A word in season, from one of inferior ability and acquirement, a discourse from one of the plainest and most homely diction, has sometimes reached the heart of the sinner or the mourner in Zion, communicating conviction to the one, and consolation to the other; while both have been repeatedly addressed to no purpose, by the most splendid in talent or captivating in eloquence; thus proving, that the arrow shot at a venture proceeded from the quiver of the Almighty, and that while the treasure was in earthen vessels, the excellency of the power thereof was from on high. Let not, then, the superiority of your knowledge ever lead you to despise the house of God, because its devotions are conducted by one inferior in wisdom to yourselves.

Nor is this all we would advance on this branch of the subject. The regular attendance on the house of God, has in itself a natural tendency to improve us in the graces of Christianity. Instruc-

tion is but one of the ends, and not the most important, for which we assemble together. We celebrate the praises of God, we engage in communion with our Maker, confessing our sins, acknowledging his mercies, and supplicating his favour. Now, surely, we cannot praise the Lord, without some meditation on his character; we cannot confess our sins without resolving to forsake them; we cannot acknowledge his mercies without gratitude for his goodness; we cannot supplicate his favour, without a sincere regard to all his commandments. But this is not all that we mean. If, in these exercises, we hold communion with our Maker, with the God whom we love, growing resemblance to him in heart and in life may be expected. For this is the natural effect of it, whether in private or in public. "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of God, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." In private, however, our devotional feelings are apt to cool, our graces to grow languid. In public, the view of others engaged in the same service with ourselves, revives our feelings, and chases away the languor of our graces. The ardent devotion of one is communicated to all the rest. The holy flame of devotion being once enkindled, spreads from heart to heart, till the whole circle of the friends of Jesus, are animated with the same spirit. Nor is it only our devotional frame, and love to God, which are thus improved. The view of so many of our fellow-creatures engaged in the holy service, naturally tends to cherish our love to one another. We there appear as brethren, children of the same Father, redeemed by the same blood, led by the same Spirit, servants of the same Master, partakers of the same faith, heirs of the same glory, and destined hereafter to sit at the same table Surely, then, such considerations cannot but excite our affection for one another. Can we behold our brethren sitting around us, and fail to love them as of the same family? Can we view them as travelling to the same home, and bear the idea of falling out by the way? Can we view them as destined to live for ever in the same blessed mansions, sit at the same table, and partake of the same repast, and yet indulge in any thing like malice, or hatred, or ill-will towards them? It may be still farther remarked, that even the personal graces here receive countenance and support. How much is the house of God calculated to purify our thoughts? The exercises in which we engage being all of a spiritual nature every idea of impurity is banished from our minds.

How well calculated, too, is the house o God, for begetting in the bosoms of me proper sentiments with regard to them selves? It humbles the pride of the great it fills with contentment the poor. It levels for a time the difference, which the distinction of ranks makes in society. "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all." Man meets with man as his brother. What, then, can better tend to produce humility in the great, than to perceive in the poorest of his fellow-worshippers, a child of the same parent with himself, enjoying on the Lord's day the same ease, and the same relaxation from bodily fatigue—favoured with the same privileges on earth, and indulging the same hopes of a happy immortality? What can be better calculated to cherish contentment in the bosom of the poorest, than to see his more wealthy neighbour on a level with himself, and himself poor as he is, on the same scale of being with the greatest, as welcome to the house of God, and equally blessed with the Gospel of peace.

The last advantageous circumstance in the public worship of God, which we shall notice, is its being a mean of our preparation for heaven. That we must be prepared for the enjoyments of heaven, if we would enter it, is a truth which we trust none will call in question. Now, while every duty has a tendency to prepare us for that blessed place, the worship of God seems peculiarly adapted for this purpose, being a similar employment with that of the celestial inhabitants, who are represented as ceasing neither day nor night to celebrate the praises of their Maker. In the book of Revelation, vii. 11, we are furnished with an example of the manner of their employment. They are represented as a great multitude before the throne, and as engaged in a social and public capacity. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Such is the employment of the redeemed who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes,

and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and it is added, "therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." The angels, too, are represented as similarly engaged. "All the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen." What, then, can better prepare us for the services of the celestial paradise, than similar services on earth? what can be a better emblem of the temple above, than the temple below? what a fitter preparation for the general assembly of the church of the first-born in heaven, than the assembly of the redeemed on earth? Let us, therefore, now begin the heavenly employment, let us commence those services which are to engage our attention in the ages of eternity. "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for this is none other than the house of God, this is none other than the very gate of heaven."

Such are some of those advantages attending the proper discharge of the duty of public worship, and our need of attending to it, for the purpose of receiving these advantages, might be shown from the risk we run of contamination, from our intercourse with the world. In the world we meet with many who discourage us in our christian course. By their scowlings at religion, and their ridiculing of its professors, they are apt to lead astray the young convert to Christianity, and endanger the faith of the more advanced. Were we to meet only with such persons, what discouragements would be thrown in our way? But, again, when we assemble in the house of God, we there meet with the friends of Christianity; the damp which the world threw on our profession is removed, the celestial lamp which had been nearly extinguished, is lighted up by the flame from the torches of our neighbours, and we who had begun to pause in our course, are enabled again to go on our way rejoicing. "Let us enter," therefore, "God's gates with praise, and his courts with the voice of thanksgiving."

We trust enough has been said to convince you both of the reasonableness and advantages of the public worship of God, and if you be convinced of these, you will not hesitate to allow its importance.

Now, brethren, if attendance on the public worship of God be an important duty, no less important must be the duty, of providing for its regular maintenance in our land. For, as the Apostle asks, "how can they believe, if they have not heard? and how can they hear without a preacher?" So may we ask, how can they join in the public worship of God, without a temple to which to resort for its performance? Hence does it become the duty of every legislature to see that provision be made for the worship of the only living and true God, that none may have cause to neglect it. This principle was sanctioned by the Most High under the ancient dispensation. Even heathen rulers are commended for their countenance and support to the true religion: and the most prosperous period of the Church is predicted as a period, when "kings shall become her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers." Brethren, we of this highly-favoured land, have reason to bless God for the establishment among us of our holy faith, and to express our thankfulness by every mean in our power. It is under God, to the laws of our country, that we owe the existence of our establishment, and the provision made for the regular dispensation of word and of sacrament among us. And how many are the blessings we owe to the establishment of our holy faith? Were it not for this, how many corners in our land, now under the influence of the truth, would at this moment have been unenlightened by its knowledge?

But while we rejoice in the establishment of our holy faith, and bless God on account of it, what reason have we, at the same time, to lament that that establishment has not been allowed to keep pace with the increase of our population? that at this moment, although the country has more than doubled her population since the Protestant establishment in Scotland, that establishment remains, in point of the number of her churches, nearly the same, as she was at her commencement. What increase has been made to church accommodation in Scotland, has been made by Dissenters, or by the friends of the Church, through the means of voluntary contribution. Much, it is true, has been done in this way, and it certainly is our duty to acknowledge, with gratitude, the contributions thus made, in order to supply the spiritual wants of

Scotland. Still, however, much remains to be done, and will always remain, unless the principle of our reformers be carried into operation—of providing a church and a school for every thousand of our population in the remoter districts of our country, and for every two thousand in her densely peopled cities. For we can never suppose, that the inhabitants of the poorer districts can provide themselves with the means of religious instruction even were they willing. Nor would it be desirable that the religious instructor should feel himself dependent on his people for support. In this case, he who ought neither to cringe to the great, nor court the applause of the multitude, would be under the temptation of framing his instructions, so as to suit the taste of his audience, rather than enlighten their understandings and improve their hearts. The more independent of his people that you make a minister, the greater reliance can you place on his disinterestedness and sincerity in the discharge of his duty.

But holding, as we do, the principle of an establishment, ought we to make no effort of our own to supply the great and increasing wants of our overgrown population? or ought we to content ourselves with simply applying to the Legislature, and wait its tardy operation? Far from it, brethren. If we be at all sensible of the value of religious instruction, we shall not hesitate to use every lawful mean in our power to procure this blessing to all around us; and if there be a want of it in our country, and Heaven has given us ability to contribute to its supply, we shall not hesitate to employ it.

It is on this principle that you of this neighbourhood have been called upon, to aid in the erection of this place of worship, which, we trust, will prove the mean of instruction to thousands of our population. You have done well in coming forward as you have done; and we trust that you will all, but especially the poor among you, reap the benefit of your exertions.

Still, you must not think you have done all that is necessary. Church accommodation, in order to be effectual, ought ever to be accompanied with regular pastoral superintendence; and we trust, therefore, that you will now give such encouragement to this infant erection, as that you may be speedily provided with a local minister, one whose time will be devoted to this district alone, and who will give himself to his people, not only in the more public, but also in the more private but no less useful duties, of the pastoral office. It was with this view, that the founders of our church, limited the population of our parishes, to the numbers already mentioned; for, where a larger population than he is able to superintend is given in charge to an individual, the duty is not done to them as it ought, and the heart of the labourer sinks within him; so that the little which he might do is often neglected, or his labours, scattered over so great a surface, are not so thoroughly done as they ought to be; nor do their effects appear as they would, were these labours confined to a manageable parish.

But, besides that the parish be a manageable one, there is another essential requisite, in order to secure the full services of a minister; and that is, that such security be given and such provision made for his support, as may raise him above the fear of want, and allow him to give his undivided attention to the spiritual duties of his office. And we confess it is desirable, that it be such as may in a great measure take away from him the temptation of a removal from his present sphere of usefulness. Nor can we help thinking, *that* minister bids fairer for happiness, as well as usefulness, who looks on the parish in which he is ordained as his resting place, giving himself entirely up to his people, as those among whom he desires to live and die, pleased even with the thought that his dust shall mingle with that of those among whom he laboured on earth, and with whom he trusts to rejoice in heaven. Nor is his zeal to be measured, nor are his labours to be appreciated, by the extent of surface over which he may travel, or the number of assemblies, in which his voice may be heard. In a country such as ours, where Christianity is the religion of the land, his labours, we may rest assured, will be most advantageous, even to the cause of the Gospel in general, when chiefly confined to the sphere, in which providence has been pleased to place him, just as the parent may expect to be more useful, who confines his exertions to the children whom God has given him, than he who scatters his labours over the families of others, to the neglect of his own. He may expect to make a deeper and a more lasting impression. And while many a pastor may be apt to feel his heart sickening within him, at the view of those thousands of never dying souls within his

parish, whose instruction he finds it impossible, by all his exertions, to overtake, there is none who has not a sphere of usefulness amply sufficient in that corner of the vineyard committed to his care. There, while he plies his every exertion, by public and private labours, by being "instant in season and out of season," may he hope, with the blessing of Heaven, to labour not in vain. Let him bear in mind, that it is the sheep of his own fold he ought constantly to tend; it is for the lambs of his own flock he ought to provide convenient food. For although the great Shepherd may have other sheep, it is in regard to the flock committed to *his* charge that he says to him, "feed my sheep," and "feed my lambs." It is, therefore, by fidelity to *them* he is to expect, in the most effectual manner, to promote the spread of the Gospel; and although his footsteps should never be traced, nor the sound of his voice be heard, beyond the glens and the mountains where his lot has been cast, yet there may he build a temple, there may he rear an altar, and there may he present a sacrifice, the thick cloud of whose incense, shall ascend in sweet memorial, before the eternal throne. There, in short, may he kindle a flame of piety, whose intensity and brightness will gradually increase, and whose boundaries will gradually extend, till it bid defiance to all the attempts of the floods of surrounding iniquity to quench it.

But while such seems to us to be the proper duty of the parish minister, it ought to be borne in mind, that there is a duty also on the parishioners, and that duty we conceive to be, to wait on his ministry. We admire the parochial system of our fathers, who enjoined on the people to attend each his own parish church, as it must be admitted by all, that it increases the interest in one another of both minister and people; when, in the private duties of the pastoral office, the minister meets with the same people to whom he dispenses the word of life, in his public ministrations. And how should we rejoice, were the time to come, when the division of overgrown parishes shall take place; when a manageable district shall be assigned to each minister; when churches shall correspond with the population of the bounds; and when each individual shall be seen repairing to *his own* church to receive the word of life from *his own* minister? Such was the plan of the founders of our establishment, and such ought to be still kept in view, in every arrangement which has for its object, the restoration of that establishment, to its original efficiency. This we can scarcely expect to see carried into operation, in those cities and towns of our native land, where a different system has been introduced, and where each repairs to him, whose ministrations suit his taste, rather than to him, whom God has set over him in holy things. But, in the country, we find much of the parochial system still in operation, and there too, do we find much of that reciprocal attachment between pastor and people, which the looser connexions of the town tend to prevent.

We have ventured to throw out these remarks, brethren, in the hope that if ever this district of our overgrown parish, should be formed into a separate erection, as much as possible of the original parochial system may be introduced. That a division of the parish, of which this district forms a part, ought to take place, the simple fact, that it contains a population at the present day equal to that of the whole county, in the year 1754, is a sufficient proof. That even after the accommodation furnished both by dissenters and by the establishment, in addition to the parish church, we still require more places of worship, and more pastoral superintendence, is also evident from the fact, that there remains a population of 9000 individuals, for whom no provision has been made. That the particular site of this new erection has been judiciously selected, will appear if you consider, that it is, about three miles distant from the parish church; that the surrounding locality contains a population of 2000 nearer *it* than any other place of worship, and that of this population, two-thirds professedly belong to the establishment.

From these, as well as other considerations, we are persuaded that you may search, and search again, before you find a locality in all respects so suitable for such an erection. Granting this, therefore, we trust you will give it every encouragement in your power. Brethren, we would at this time call upon you to lend us, by your pecuniary aid, a helping hand. It is for the poor among us that we solicit your assistance. It is to supply not their temporal, but their spiritual wants; and bear in mind, that they are not only of the same human kind with yourselves, but are your neighbours by local situation; and, surely, if you see it your duty to aid in sending the Gospel to other quarters of the globe, while you neglect

those in your own neighbourhood, you know little of the spirit of that religion which led the Apostle to say, "If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

While these remarks apply particularly to those in the more immediate locality, those also who are present from a neighbouring town may bear in mind, that their city will, at the same time, receive benefit by this erection, as if it accommodate a portion of the population who now repair to its churches, a greater number of sittings will be left in them, for its more immediate inhabitants. But, brethren, even although you should not derive personal benefit from this erection, still would we call on you, as Christians, to give it your support. As lovers of the Lord Jesus, it becomes you to seek the good of those for whom he shed his blood; and, therefore, we trust you will respond to this call, which is made on your christian charity; and while you go into God's tabernacles yourselves, and worship at his footstool, be desirous at the same time to prove instrumental in bringing others along with you, to join in the same holy devotion.

But, besides all this, reasoning even on worldly principles, we might urge you to give your aid to the multiplication of places of worship, and an increase of spiritual superintendence; for we have no hesitation in affirming, that the introduction and increase of poors' rates in Scotland, has been in a great measure owing, not so much to the increase of our population, as to our establishment not keeping pace with that population. In manageable parishes, especially where the parish church is the resort of the people, and the collections are not diverted from their legitimate purpose, to this day, no assessment for the poor is needed; nay, in some, the collections do more than supply the immediate wants of the poor. Nor, had our ecclesiastical arrangements met the demands of our increasing population, would it have been different in many other places, of our native land; and while we have reason to think, the poor would have thus been amply provided for, the assessments for prisons and police establishments, would have been comparatively small; while you would have seen rising up around you, an intelligent and a virtuous people, who would have respected your Sabbaths, reverenced your laws, and defended your property; and such an improvement in the habits of our people, were it yet effected, would far outweigh those pounds and shillings by which it is brought about.

But not to enlarge on this topic, we would rather encourage you to christian liberality, in providing for the spiritual wants of your neighbours, by reminding you of the noble and godlike cause in which you engage. It is the cause of heaven, of that Saviour who "though rich became poor, that through his poverty you might be rich." You are fellow-workers with him, whose love to you, and to those for whom your charity is solicited, induced him even to "endure the cross." It is the cause of one who considers every thing done to his people as done to himself, and who in due time will bless you with an ample reward. It is that honourable work, in which he delights, and who, while you co-operate with him, will not fail in making you sharers in his joy. It is a work, whose effects are not confined to the present scene of your existence, but which will follow you, to the regions of immortality. Not only will the present generation rise up and call you blessed, on account of that salvation, whose knowledge they have learned in this house of prayer, but even those, who in future ages may derive benefit from the temple, to the erection of which you have this day contributed, may, in the world to come, hail you as the mean, through whose instrumentality the light of the glorious Gospel, poured its radiance on their benighted souls, and pointed out to them the path which conducts to immortality.

We are unwilling to conclude, without expressing our hope that there are many now present connected with this locality, who value the courts of the Lord, and rejoice when it is said to them, "Let us go up to the house of our God." What reason have you, then, to be grateful for the erection of this house in which you may worship the God of your fathers. It is true, it is not the place, but the manner in which God's worship is performed, which renders it acceptable to him. Still, however, the rearing of a place of worship, comfortable even to age and infirmity, is a benefit for which it becomes you to be grateful; and like the Jews, who solicit our Lord in behalf of the centurion, who "loved their nation, and built them a synagogue," you ought not to forget, but be ready to acknowledge the kindness of your benefactors; and if we are to regard their kindness towards you, as a

proof of their attachment to our holy faith, nothing on your part, will delight them more, than to see the house they have built, made the place of your weekly resort.

Above all, let your gratitude ascend to Him who is the giver of every good and of every perfect gift. And while you express your thankfulness for this place of worship, implore, at the same time, of the Great Head of the Church, to send you in due time, a pastor who may feed you with food convenient for you.

And now to conclude, may God's presence ever be with you, who shall meet in this house to direct you by his grace. May he bless your public meetings and religious festivals, and may they be a mean, through his influence, of preparing you for the Sabbath of rest and the sanctuary above, to which may he in due time bring you all, that you who celebrate together his praises upon earth, may unite your voices in swelling that celestial note, which, in the temple above, ascends unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

ON EARLY PIETY;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. R. WILSON, A.M.,

Greenock.

"*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*"—Eccl. xii. 1

Were any of you, christian brethren, intending to emigrate to a country of which you had little knowledge, and where you expected to spend the remainder of your days, you would certainly consider yourselves fortunate in meeting with any one who was fully qualified to give you a particular account of it. Believing your future prospects to be deeply affected by his communications, you would listen to him with the profoundest attention, and, according to his information, make such preparations as appeared necessary for rendering you comfortable and prosperous in your new habitation. Into a world of which, as yet, you have little acquaintance, many of you are about to enter; and to such nothing can be of greater importance than the useful intelligence and salutary advice of one who has obtained a complete knowledge of it by experience. Never was there a man who knew the world better than Solomon; for God gave unto him "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, as the sand that is on the sea shore." And, along with his wisdom and understanding, he possessed the brightest genius, the greatest riches, and an ardent desire of finding out wherein consists the chief happiness of man. Earth, as if eager to obtain his approbation, gathered unto him her choicest treasures; and were true felicity to be found among men, it might naturally have been expected in the habitation of Solomon. The queen of Sheba, indeed, speaks as if it had been found there. "Happy," said she, "are thy men; happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom." She was, however, mistaken; for, after having run the whole course of earthly enjoyment, leaving no pleasure untasted, he returns with this melancholy account of all sublunary things: "All is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no profit under the sun."

Let it, however, be observed, that it is respecting the things of time only that the royal preacher comes to such a mournful conclusion. While, like his father David, he had seen an end of all perfection, like him also, he saw that the commandment of the Lord was exceeding broad. It is for this reason that he so earnestly exhorts mankind to begin early to fear the Lord and keep his commandments. To love the Lord, to fear the Lord, and to wait on the Lord, are scriptural phrases, used to express the whole of religious duty. In the text, however, the term remember is used with great propriety, seeing the exhortation is addressed to the young, who are very apt,

amidst all the gay and fascinating allurements which the world exposes to the inexperienced eye, to forget their Creator, whom to worsbip and enjoy is the chief end for which mankind were created, and are still upheld in existence.

In directing your attention to this important exhortation, I shall endeavour to sbow, in the first place, what is meant by remembering our Creator; in the second place, the propriety of remembering him early; and, in the third place, I shall offer a few remarks calculated to incite the young to the immediate performance of this momentous duty.

I. We proceed, tben, in the first place, to show what is meant by remembering our Creator. There is more implied in the text tban merely that we ought not to forget that we have a Creator. It is implied that we ought to endeavour to know bim, to think and speak of him in a manner suited to his exalted character, and to do so habitually. To remember our Creator aright, then, is,

1st. To know him. It is not, however, supposed that a perfect knowledge of God is necessary before we can keep him in remembrance. "For who, by searching, can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Such a knowledge of our Creator as will enable us to worsbip and glorify him in a proper manner may, nevertheless, be obtained. What though he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth bis clouds upon it? "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Thus the large volume of creation lies open before us, and on every page is tbe character of the Deity clearly inscribed. It is indeed true, that owing to the orginal depravity of human nature, the eye of reason is so blinded, that it cannot behold the true character of God as it is recorded there; yet that is no reason why we should despair of obtaining the knowledge required, since he who spread before us the wonderful volume of nature, has also spread before us the more wonderful volume of revelation, in which his divine perfections are perspicuously delineated. Search, therefore, the Scriptures diligently, and there you will behold reflected, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Proceed not, however, depending solely on your own strength. In successfully searching the Scriptures, the assistance of tbe Holy Spirit is indispensably necessary. Assiduously, then, implore his aid, tbat you may be led to the knowledge of the only true God, and so be enabled to render him adoration due to his glorious and fearful name; for, ere long, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God;" "but the people that know their God shall be strong."

2dly. To think and speak of him in a manner suited to his exalted character. Dwelling in light inaccessible, Jehovah never was, nor can be, seen by mortal eye. In order to think of him, so as to fill our minds with sacred adoration, it is, therefore, necessary that we contemplate his glory through the medium of his holy Word, and the wonderful works which he bas so profusely scattered around.

The *eternal duration of God* is a subject in which our most vigorous thoughts are lost in amazement! Quick as the winged lightning, they reacb the utmost supposed verge of time; but should they attempt the ocean of eternity, soon, like the dove which Noah sent forth from the ark, tbey are compelled to return, and seek rest in the place whence they took their flight.

From Jehovah's eternity of being, an idea of too much magnitude for the grasp of created intellect, let us turn our thoughts to the contemplation of Him as the Creator and Preserver of all things; and here, having objects innumerable to attract the attention, the mind will be filled with devout adoration, and wander with delight.

Once this universe did not exist. But God said, "Let it be," and so it was. Even this planet which we inhabit is fitted to fill the contemplative mind with astonishment. Whether we consider the small streamlet that gently gurgles down the side of the mountain, the mighty river that rolls rapidly along the plain, or the hoary ocean proudly heaving its vast billows from shore to shore: whether we consider the lofty cedars of Lebanon, or the lowly hyssop that springs from the wall, the vast leviathan that gambols in the deep, or the smallest insect that flutters in the beam of day; we are led to exclaim, with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

From earth let us turn our eyes upwards, and contemplate the heavens which God, by his Spirit, hath garnished. How glorious an object is the sun rolling on in undiminished splendour his diurnal course through the sky; and, when he sinks in the western wave, how magnificent is the star-wove curtain which the Parent of nature spreads over the stillness of the night! Vast, however, as the visible creation is, it is but a small speck in comparison to that which lies beyond our view. Could we transport ourselves through the boundless fields of space, we would see system rising beyond system, until we found, by experience, that the works of creation are as unsearchable as their Creator! and be forced to say, with Job, "Lo! these are part of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the full thunder of his power who can understand?"

Not only in the work of creation is the power and glory of God manifested; they shine conspicuously forth in his continually upholding and governing all things which he at first created. His hand at once opens the blossom of the lowliest flower, and spreads the branches of the loftiest oak; shakes the slender reed, and heaves the ponderous billows of the ocean; directs the feeble insect in its flight, and guides the mighty planets in their courses! In heaven, in earth, and in hell, he rules with unbounded sway. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all."

But what advantage would it be to us to contemplate God as the Creator and Governor of the universe! Could we not think of him under the more endearing character of "God our Redeemer?" In the contemplation of Jehovah in this character, let us therefore delight to dwell. The wicked, the fallen angels, can equally with us say, "We know that our *Creator* liveth;" but none, save the believer in Jesus, can say, with sincerity, "I know that my *Redeemer* liveth."

While we think of God with wonder and astonishment, it is necessary that we speak of him with the profoundest reverence. Many there are who profess to admire the works of nature, who have no respect for their Author's glorious name. But let us always remember, that however mankind may excuse themselves for this impious conduct, yet the "Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

3dly. To remember our Creator aright, is to think of him habitually. There are many of whom it may be justly said, that God is not in all their thoughts; who conduct themselves as if they were of no higher order than the beasts of the field; who eat and drink without ever thinking of the benevolent hand that feeds them; who sleep and wake without acknowledging the divine protection; nay, who assemble even in the house of prayer without seriously thinking of the Being whom they have met to worship. "They draw near to God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him." Others think of him at stated seasons, in the hour of danger, when sickness overtakes them, when they assemble around the family altar, or in the house of prayer; but, when mingling with the world, they allow the remembrance of their Creator completely to escape from their minds. Such do not comply with the exhortation in the text. They only do so, who, like David, make the law of the Lord their continual delight, and meditate thereon night and day. Such set the Lord always before them; and whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, their constant care is to do all to the glory of God.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. R. WILSON, Greenock.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES MACKINLAY, D.D., Kilmarnock.

ON EARLY PIETY;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. R. WILSON.—*Concluded.*

II. Having thus shown that to remember our Creator is to know him, to think and speak of him in a manner suited to his exalted character, and to do so habitually, I come now, as was proposed, in the second place, to show the propriety of remembering him early. This will appear, if we consider,

1st. That early piety renders a religious course of life more natural and pleasant. The power of habit, in forming the character of man, is too well known to require illustration. By the influence of habit, things naturally disagreeable are rendered not only tolerable, but even pleasant. How delightful, then, must it make the practice of piety, which requires only to be known to be beloved! They who have been taught early to fear God and sanctify the Sabbath-day, feel, in the service of their Maker, a holy and sublime delight, which to the men of the world is altogether unknown. Accustomed to the yoke of Christ, they find it easy. Acquainted with wisdom, they find, by experience, her ways to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace.

2dly. To remember our Creator early, preserves us from many dangers to which mankind are liable in the flower of youth. "The fear of the Lord," saith Solomon, "is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." And the snares which are spread for the precious soul are in this world many and dangerous. Pleasure is eagerly pursued by the young. This the adversary of our souls knows, and all his snares are baited with pleasure. The lips of her that hunteth for the precious soul drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. The song of the drunkard is, "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered." When the passions are strong, the spirits buoyant, and the experience small, how easily to the allurements of the destroyer does the unsuspecting youth become a prey! But, while thus the simple perish for lack of knowledge, they who early fear the Lord shall escape. In vain does the world display its enticing pleasures to the eye which delights in contemplating the beauty of holiness! Temples of public festivity and amusement seem sacred to the carnal eye; but to the eye of the redeemed they appear as the slaughter-houses of souls! as the entrances to the bottomless pit! The wise avoid them, pass not by them, turn from them and pass away.

3dly. To remember the Lord early consoles us under the miseries of life, and supports us at the hour of death. To how many diseases, both of body and mind, are mankind liable while journeying through this vale of tears! How often do unfore-

seen and unavoidable misfortunes hang a dark cloud over our brightest prospects, and cause us to descend mourning to the grave! "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." And, amidst pining sickness, corroding cares, bitter disappointments, and afflicting bereavements, where shall he look for consolation? Can the pleasures of this world comfort those who need to be comforted? Ah! my friends, they who make the experiment will at last be forced to exclaim, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" Deplorable, indeed, is the condition of those who, in the hour of distress, have no consolation save what this world can bestow! But happy are they who have early sought and obtained the favour of their Creator; for he will be their refuge and their strength, a very present help in the time of trouble. Do their father and their mother forsake them? The Lord will take them up Are their friends false? He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Do their relatives and companions sicken and die? He is the resurrection and the life. Do their clayey tabernacles begin to decay? They have buildings of God, houses not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Are they ready to faint under the pressure of poverty? He reminds them that He who clothes the grass of the field, and feedeth the young ravens when they cry, will not forget to satisfy his children with bread. In all their anxieties they cast their care upon him, being assured that he careth for them. "Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made the heaven and the earth. The Lord is his light and his salvation; whom shall he fear? The Lord is the strength of his life; of whom shall he be afraid? The Lord is his strong habitation, whereunto he shall resort; his rock, his dwelling-place through all generations."

But the advantages of early piety are never more sensibly experienced than at the hour of death—that dark, that solemn, that dreadful hour, from which all the pleasures of this world hasten away! How awful is it even to witness the death of a sinner, whose conscience aroused, musters his iniquities around him! But how much more inexpressibly awful is it to be in his situation! Earth sliding from under him, every refuge failing him, the pit of perdition yawning beneath him, and the angels of darkness waiting the divine permission to drag him down headlong into the doleful regions of interminable wo!

From this awful scene, how solemnly pleasing is it to turn our eyes to the death-bed of one who has early committed the keeping of his soul into the hands of his God and Saviour? The world is also sliding from under him, but he heeds it not, for his hand is fastened on the sky! The valley of the shadow of death is, indeed, also to him dark and gloomy, but beyond it he sees the glorious dawning of immortality. The pangs of death may take hold of his body, but his soul is at ease, calm and serene, as the star of the evening, shining through the azure opening of the contending clouds. From all sublunary objects, he turns his heaven-longing eye, fixes it steadfastly on the Sun of Righteousness, and, eagle-like, soars to the mansions of eternal day! "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

III. Having now shown what is meant by remembering our Creator, the propriety of remembering him early, I proceed now, in the third and last place, to offer a few remarks calculated to incite the young to the immediate performance of this momentous duty.

1st. Life is short and uncertain. This is a statement which needs no confirmation. Daily observation and experience evidently show that human life is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away; that man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; and fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. Are not these weeds of mourning, in which many of you are arrayed, powerful arguments in proof of the shortness and uncertainty of human existence? For whom are these badges of sorrow worn? only for those who have come to their grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season. Ah! are they not rather for those who have been cut off in the dawn of life? or in the noon of their days? Death extends his empire over all; and neither rank nor riches, nor youth nor beauty, nor health nor strength, can avail in averting his poisonous shafts, or suspending his deadly blow. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They

shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." How unwise, then, to delay another moment in seriously considering the matters of our souls respecting eternity? Have not the youngest amongst you had companions who are now sleeping in the dark and lonely chambers of the grave? Do you not read on their monuments, "Be ye also ready?" Ask yonder aged man, where are the associates of his childhood and youth; and he will tell you that, with few exceptions, they are gone to the invisible world—gone, to give in their account at the tribunal of the Almighty, and left him as a stranger even in his native land! Since the arrival of death is so uncertain, for your departure immediately begin to prepare; because of you this very night your souls may be required. But, I remark,

2dly. That the natural tendency of the human heart is to wax worse and worse; and, therefore, though we were sure of living for many years, yet delay, in matters of religion, is awfully dangerous. In this assembly, perhaps, there are few who are fully persuaded of their being completely prepared for leaving this world and entering on another state of existence; and yet there is not one who does not fondly hope that, before he receive the solemn summons, he shall be in a condition of perfect readiness to take his departure. You intend, at some future period, to begin earnestly to seek after the Lord, and devote your lives to his service. But when do you imagine that that fortunate period will arrive? To morrow. How can you mention *to-morrow*, when you know that it has already allured many thousands of your fellow-mortals to utter destruction? It is an "ignis fatuus" that dances on the mouth of the bottomless pit! Near as to-morrow may seem, it lies beyond the utmost extent of human existence. The man over whose head fourscore years have rolled their courses, whose feet are tottering on the brink of the grave, whose body is bending to embrace his parent earth, still ardently looks forward after the deluding phantom, till the cold hand of death seals up his fading eyes, and hides it for ever from his view. But you, perhaps, intend only to taste a few of the pleasures of life, and then seriously engage all your powers in serving your Creator. So did many who are now in hell! That your hearts are already prone to vice, none will attempt to deny; and do you imagine that, after you have taken the name of the Lord your God in vain, inflamed your vilest affections with drunkenness, and quenched the blushes of ingenuous shame amidst the polluted waters of sensuality, you will then have more inclination to quit the gay and fascinating scenes of earthly pleasure, for the supposed dull and unsatisfying joys of heavenly devotion? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

3dly. But granting that your minds were not more vitiated by remaining unmindful of religion till old age, yet that season is very unfit for commencing a business of so vast importance. Is it time to begin diligently to search the Scriptures, when those that look out of the windows are darkened? Is it time to begin attendance on the public ordinances of God, when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves? Is it time to begin the praises of Jehovah, when all the daughters of music are brought low? In how pitiable a condition is that man, however rich or respected by the world, who has never thought seriously of a future state, or the means of obtaining the favour of a justly offended God, until the grasshopper, alighting on his shoulder, prove a burden; and all the faculties of his mind lie chilled around the dying embers of life, which glow feebly through the opening chinks of his shattered frame? Truly, then, the days are come, and the years have overtaken him, in which he experiences no pleasure; for the strength of the old man is labour and sorrow. How infatuated, then, are those individuals who defer the consideration of matters of such awful moment, to a season so unpropitious! Who would think of delaying the work of the day, until the shadows of night were beginning to fall? or, to commit the precious seed to the ground, till the cold breath of winter had unfructified the soil? Why, then, delay commencing the important work of the day of life, until the dark shadows of the night of death are beginning to close around you? Why delay sowing the seeds of piety till all the affections of the heart are withered by the winter of age? Away, then, with procrastination! "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

THE TRUTH OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JAMES MACKINLAY, D.D.,
Minister of the Laigh Church, Kilmarnock.

"*Thomas answered and said, My Lord and my God.*"—JOHN xx. 28.

THE character of Thomas, from what is recorded of him in the Gospel, seems to have been of a mixed kind, exhibiting many excellent qualities, combined, however, with some lamentable defects. He seems to have been a man of ardent feelings, imprudent forwardness, undaunted fortitude, and unreasonable incredulity. When our Saviour announced to his disciples, at a distance from Bethany, that their friend Lazarus was dead, but that he purposed to go to him, Thomas, aware of the danger that would attend such a visit, boldly replied, "Let *us* also go that we may *die* with him." When, a little before his death, our Saviour was comforting his disciples with the assurance that in his father's house there were many mansions; that he was going to prepare a place for them, and would come again and receive them to himself, Thomas said unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." When the ten disciples, after our Lord's resurrection, assured him that they had seen the Lord, and that he had showed them his hands and his side, Thomas, who was absent upon this occasion, declared, that unless he had the same sensible evidence of the fact he would not believe. This was an unreasonable demand, for the testimony of his ten brethren might have satisfied him as to the fact. In this state of mind he seems to have continued till next Lord's day, when Jesus appeared unto him and the rest of the disciples; and on receiving the evidence which he required, he exclaimed, in the words of the text, "My Lord and my God."

It is our purpose in this discourse,

I. To show you the import of the exclamation of the Apostle, and then to conclude with some practical deductions from what may be advanced.

1st. Then, this exclamation implies a full and decided conviction of the truth of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is a fact which lies at the foundation of the christian system; and if this fact is established by sufficient evidence, the truth of Christianity must be admitted by every candid and inquiring mind. Christianity, indeed, is a religion founded on fact, and its principal doctrines are nothing but the natural and necessary deductions resulting from these facts. It is this circumstance that brings the evidence of our holy religion within a very narrow compass, and renders it plain and palpable to the meanest capacity. As we do not learn the existence of God from abstract reasoning, but from the existence of a visible creation, from which we infer the existence of the great Creator, so from the fact of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead, we infer the truth and divinity of his religion. The resurrection of Christ being a matter of fact, cannot be proved by demonstration, for it does not admit of this species of evidence. It can only be established, like other facts, by credible testimony; and when we inquire with candour into this testimony, we find it sufficient and satisfactory. The evidence which is given of its truth in the Gospel, as stated with the most artless simplicity, and at the same time with so much *particularity* and minuteness of detail, as to be completely at variance with any thing like artifice or deceit. The witnesses were quite competent to judge of the fact, and in every respect were credible and unexceptionable witnesses. It is true, they were not men of profound learning, or employed in philosophical investigations; but they were men of sound sense and fair character, and therefore were as well qualified to bear witness to a matter of fact, or to what they saw or heard, as the most learned sage or profound philosopher. Moreover, being persons who were intimately acquainted with our Saviour, and had attended him during the whole of his public ministry, they were best qualified to

bear witness to his identity after his resurrection. Besides, instead of being biassed by prejudice, or confidently expecting his resurrection, they entertained doubts concerning it, and were slow of heart to believe it. Though the prophets had predicted the resurrection of the Messiah, and Christ himself had repeatedly assured his disciples that he would not only be crucified, but would rise again on the third day; yet they seemed either to have misunderstood, or not to have remembered his declaration, and therefore were unwilling to believe the truth of his resurrection. Accordingly we find, that when some of the females who had gone early to the sepulchre with spices to embalm our Saviour's body, returned in haste to announce to the disciples the joyful tidings of his having appeared unto them, they would not believe them. On the same day when he appeared to two of his disciples going to Emmaus, and when they returned to Jerusalem to communicate this intelligence to the rest of the disciples, they would not believe them. Nay, we find when the disciples were assembled on the evening of the same day at Jerusalem, and Jesus appeared in the midst of them, saying, "Peace be unto you," instead of believing the truth of his resurrection, they were terrified, supposing they had seen a spirit. But he said unto them, "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh nor bones as ye see me have;" and when he had thus spoken to them, he showed them his hands, and his feet, and his side. While they yet believed not for joy and wondered, he inquired if they had any meat, and they gave him a piece of a broiled fish and an honeycomb, and he took them and did eat before them, and said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me; for thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day. As the Apostles were to be witnesses of the truth of our Lord's resurrection, for this was a principal part of their official duty, so it was highly proper that they should be completely satisfied of the truth of this important fact, in order that they might give their decided and unequivocal testimony, saying, "That which we have seen, and heard, and handled of the word of life declare we unto you." The number of the witnesses was not only sufficient, but they had ample opportunities of judging of the truth of the fact they were to testify. It was not one or two who saw him, but even five hundred brethren at once. They beheld him separately and collectively; they looked upon him, conversed with him, and eat and drank with him; for he showed himself alive to them after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Besides, the disciples not only declared the truth of our Lord's resurrection at the time it happened, but they persisted to the last in attesting the truth of it, and some of them sealed their testimony with their blood. Now, although some may have died martyrs to a matter of opinion, yet the disciples of Christ were the only persons who sacrificed themselves in the attestation of a fact to which they were not inclined by education or worldly interests, and which the malice of the Jews would have induced them to disprove, if it had been in their power. Thus it appears that we have the most satisfactory evidence of the truth of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Though Thomas once doubted the truth of the fact, yet being now fully convinced of its reality, he expresses his conviction in the exclamation of the text, "My Lord and my God."

In like manner every Christian who believes this truth upon the testimony of Scripture, and has a conviction of its truth from his own experience, for he knows Christ in the power of his resurrection, or the power which he exerts in consequence of his resurrection, in sending the Holy Spirit into his heart to quicken him to walk in newness of life, (being risen with Christ, and setting his affections on things that are above,) he will adopt the language of the Apostle concerning his risen Redeemer, and say of him, "My Lord and my God."

2dly. This exclamation implies a conviction of our Saviour's essential dignity and supreme divinity. Accordingly, Thomas addresses him as his Lord and his God. This is language which he could not employ in addressing the most exalted creature without being guilty of impious blasphemy. All the disciples had the most satisfactory evidence of our Lord's divinity. On several occasions he detected their

secret thoughts and the private reasonings in which they were engaged. They heard him with a word command the raging winds and the roaring waves into a calm, and they also heard him call the dead from the grave, after having remained in it four days, and the dead instantly obeyed his voice. These proofs of his divinity seem to have convinced them that he was a divine person, possessed of the incommunicable attributes of omniscience and omnipotence. Accordingly we find, that when our Lord asked his disciples, saying, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter, in name of the rest, replied, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God;" upon which our Lord declared, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonas; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." If our Saviour, however, had been a mere man, as some maintain, this revelation could not have been necessary to obtain this knowledge, for the fact of his humanity must have been evident to their bodily senses. When the Apostle, therefore, declared that he was the Son of the living God, he must be understood to mean that he was more than a man, or even than a prophet, and that he was possessed of true and proper divinity. When Christ is designated in Scripture the Son of God, the son of the blessed, the only begotten and well-beloved Son of God, and his own son, or the son of himself, these terms obviously mark his true divinity; for Christ is the Son of God in a sense peculiar to himself. When Christ called God his Father, and declared that he and the Father were one, the Jews took up stones to cast at him, saying, they were about to stone him not for any good work he had done, but for blasphemy; because, that being a man, he made himself God. We find also when our Saviour was adjured by the High Priest to tell him who he was, and when witnessing a good confession, he declared that he was the Son of God, the High Priest said he hath spoken blasphemy: "What need have we of witnesses? behold, ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death." The blasphemy, therefore, with which he was charged by the High Priest, and to which the Jews consented, was his calling himself the Son of God. But blasphemy, we know, consists either in denying the divine perfections, or in impiously arrogating them to ourselves. Now, with blasphemy of the first kind the Jews did not charge our Lord; for he neither denied nor derided any of the divine attributes. It was, therefore, with blasphemy of the second kind that they accused him, or with claiming those divine titles and honours to himself which belonged only to God. Though the Jews, however, declared that he was a blasphemer, and was worthy of death, yet, being subject to the Roman government, they could not put any man to death without the sanction of the governor. Accordingly we find them exhibiting this charge against him at the bar of the governor, saying, "We have a law, and by this law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." It is quite futile to allege, that the term Son of God means no more than that he was the Father's servant; for, in the language of the New Testament, the terms son and servant are not terms of equality, but opposition. Angels are all ministering spirits, and Moses, the man of God, was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a son over his own house. Jesus, therefore, was a son before he was a servant; and the Apostle observes, that although he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. If Christ were a mere creature of the highest order, by the law of creation he must be a servant; but Christ is the Son of God in a sense peculiar to himself; and, therefore, when Peter declared, in name of all the rest, that Christ was the Son of the living God, he announced their conviction of his being a divine person. But the disciples' belief in this truth might be shaken when our Saviour was crucified and laid in the tomb; for then, like the sun, he set for a little in a dark cloud, but in the morning of the resurrection he arose in glory, and thus demonstrated the truth of his divinity. Hence we read (Romans i. 3,) that "Christ was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." In this passage the two natures of Christ are contrasted; for the phrase, according to the flesh, evidently refers to his humanity, and in this view he was of the seed of David; but with respect to his superior nature, or the Spirit of holiness, he was declared by his resurrection to be a divine person, or the Son of the living God. His resurrection did not constitute himself the Son of God; it only proved him to be, what he declared himself to be previous to his

resurrection, the Son of God. The opposition between the decision of the Sanhedrim and the declaration of our Saviour, seemed to be undetermined till the morning of the resurrection; but, by raising him from the dead, God attested the truth of our Lord's assertion, and proved him to be the Son and sent of God. The resurrection of Christ not only removes the reproach cast upon him by his enemies, but proves him to be possessed of true divinity. Though his disciples might have doubted of this prior to his resurrection, yet they were no sooner satisfied of the truth of this fact, than the belief in his divinity was fully established; and this belief is obviously implied in the exclamation of Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Now, if Thomas and the rest of the disciples were convinced of our Lord's divinity by his resurrection from the dead, ought not the truth of the same fact to convince all real Christians of the truth of the same important doctrine? Must they not believe that the Word existed in the beginning with God, and was God, and that our Saviour is Emmanuel, God with us, or God manifest in the flesh; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person? When the Father addresses the Son, he calls him God; for unto the Son he saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He is styled in the New Testament the "true God, and God over all, and blessed for evermore." He is possessed of all the perfections peculiar to the deity, performs the works which none but the Almighty can perform, for he created and sustains the universe; he received that worship upon earth, which is ascribed to him in heaven, and which it would be idolatry to pay to any created intelligence; for we are to worship the Lord our God, and him only are we to serve. All true Christians, therefore, being convinced of our Lord's supreme divinity, honour the Son even as they honour the Father, and, adopting the language of our text, call him their Lord and their God.

3dly. This exclamation implies an humble hope of personal interest in Christ as our Lord and God. It is the glory of the Gospel that it sets before all who hear it a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour for their acceptance. This Saviour is held forth to them without any meritorious qualification to entitle them to accept of him as their Lord. The call and invitation of the Gospel are addressed indiscriminately to all. Its voice is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come buy and eat, without money and without price." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." As the manna fell around the camp of Israel in the wilderness for the sustenance of the people, and it was the duty of every individual to go out and gather it, or as the water from the rock followed them for their refreshment, and it was their duty to drink of it, so Christ, the bread and water of life, is freely set before us in the Gospel; and every one who receives and eats of this bread and drinks of this water has personal interest in them, and shall live for ever. Christ is exhibited to us in the Gospel as the figure of the serpent was to ancient Israel on the pole; and every one has not only a right to look to him, but by looking to him shall be saved by him. Christ is God's unspeakable gift to all who hear the Gospel; and while this free exhibition of the Saviour gives a right to every individual to receive him, and renders it his indispensable duty to accept of him, nor can he reject him in unbelief, without despising the Saviour and neglecting the great salvation of the Gospel. As the law is addressed to every one to whom it is published, so the Gospel speaks to every one to whom it is proclaimed; and as we shall not be convinced by the law that we are sinners, till we apply it to ourselves as individuals who have transgressed it, so we shall neither be saved nor comforted by the Gospel till we make a personal application of it to ourselves—receive the atonement, and rely upon Christ as our only and all-sufficient Saviour. By receiving Christ in this manner as God's unspeakable gift, we have personal interest in him, and he becomes our Saviour; "for to as many as receive him he gives power or privilege to become the sons of God to them who believe on his name. The acceptance of a gift, it is obvious, makes it ours, and gives us personal interest in what we receive; and, therefore, when we cordially embrace the Saviour as set before us in the Gospel, we may, without any presumption, claim interest in him, and call him our Lord and our God. Thomas, therefore, being conscious of his faith in the risen Redeemer, claims interest

in him; and all who believe the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ, who trust in the promise and repose in the Saviour for salvation, may also claim interest in him as their Lord. But although some degree of hope of personal interest in Christ and the salvation of the Gospel, must in the nature of things result from a firm faith in the Saviour, yet as this faith is not in the same degree of strength in every believer, so we may deceive ourselves by imagining we believe in Christ when we are destitute of this principle. This hope, therefore, must be strengthened and confirmed by our faith producing its appropriate effects in purifying our hearts, overcoming the world, and exciting us to the practice of godliness and good works. Hence it is that professing Christians are enjoined by the Apostle to examine themselves whether or not they are in the faith, to give all diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, and not to be slothful, but followers of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises. It is thus they obtain the most satisfactory evidence that their faith is genuine; that they have personal interest in Christ, and may claim connexion in him as their Lord. Accordingly we find Old and New Testament believers, whose works proved their faith to be sincere, claiming interest in God as their God. The Psalmist often calls God *his* God and King. The spouse declares, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And Isaiah says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God." Mary, in her beautiful song, said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;" and Paul declares, "that he knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded that Christ was able to keep what he had committed unto him against that day; and that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, that he might be found in him;" and here Thomas calls him his Lord and God. While Jehovah acknowledges that he is the God of his people, they hope in him under this relation *their* God, and rejoice in him in the absence of all created comforts, saying, (Habb. iii. 17.) "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." While faith is weak hope cannot be strong; but when this principle is in vigorous exercise, hope of personal interest in Christ must be the necessary result.

But, 4thly. This exclamation implies holy joy, and humble triumph in the Redeemer. While Thomas was ignorant of the resurrection of Christ, or would not believe this joyful truth, like the other disciples, he would mourn and weep. But now, when Christ afforded him the evidence of his resurrection which he demanded, now when he had seen, handled, and heard him, and was fully convinced of the reality of his resurrection, his grief was not only removed, but gives place to joy and triumph; and these feelings are expressed in the exclamation before us, "My Lord and my God!" The other disciples, we are informed, were glad when they saw the Lord after his resurrection. And Thomas having now seen him, must have shared in their gladness, and which must have been enhanced by the depth and duration of his previous sorrow. The declaration of Christ unto his disciples prior to his death, would now be partially fulfilled: "Now ye are sorrowful, but I will see you again; and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." True faith in the Redeemer, or in the efficacy of his death and reality of his resurrection, is always accompanied with holy joy, which must be proportioned to the strength of our belief. The life of a believer, therefore, is not a life of sorrow and sadness, of melancholy and misery, for although he must constantly mourn over his sins, yet he will always rejoice in Christ Jesus, and thus he will realize the description which the Apostle gives of christian experience, though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. The Christian who cordially believes the great truths of the Gospel, connected with the resurrection of Christ, experiences a joy and gladness of which the ungodly have no conception. This joy is at once the Christian's duty and privilege; it is his duty, because he is enjoined always to rejoice in the Lord; and it is his privilege, because the God of hope fills him with all joy and peace in believing. The Christian rejoices in the person and propitiation of Jesus Christ in his official character, in the relations in which he stands to his people, in his resurrection as an evidence of the acceptance of his sacrifice and as a proof and pledge of their own future blessed resurrection.

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He rejoices in his love and wisdom, his fulness and grace, and in the power and authority with which he is invested as his Lord and leader. He rejoices in being delivered from all his enemies, from sin, Satan, and a present world; and he rejoices not only in maintaining communion with him in his ordinances upon earth, but in the animating prospect of his second glorious advent to perfect his redemption, and to bestow upon him a crown of glory which shall never fade away. This joy, which every Christian in a greater or less degree must feel, is far superior to the noisy mirth of worldly or wicked men; and it sometimes rises to ecstasy and transport, being a joy unspeakable and full of glory—a joy which language cannot express, being an earnest of that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore. This joy is rational, for it is not only suited to our rational natures, but a joy for which we can assign a sufficient reason. It is a joy which invigorates the Christian's mind, and fits him for performing duties which otherwise would be impracticable, and sustaining trials which would be insupportable, for the joy of the Lord is the believer's strength. It is a joy which is pure and unmixed, being free from every polluting ingredient; and it is a joy as *permanent* as it is *pure*, for Christians always triumph in Christ Jesus. Amidst all the changes of this transitory world, this joy never entirely leaves the Christian; for, as the sun always shines during the day, though clouds may sometimes obscure his brightness, so though clouds of ignorance and unbelief may at times darken the Christian's prospect, or diminish his joy, yet these are soon dispelled, and the Sun of Righteousness arises upon him with renovated splendour, illuminating his path of duty, and discovering to him the regions of a serene sky. Though the Christian's joy may not be always lively, yet it always lives; like the water from the rock, it follows him through the wilderness of this world, and shall terminate in eternal triumph in the celestial world; for the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

5thly. This exclamation implies admiration of our Lord's condescension, and shame on account of his former incredulity. Our Saviour, while in this world, manifested the greatest kindness to his disciples, and he especially showed great condescension to Thomas on his refusing to believe a fact upon the testimony of his brethren. As his unbelief was highly unreasonable, our Lord might have allowed him to remain under its influence, but he condescended to afford him the evidence which he required: "Reach hither thy finger," said he, "and behold my hands; and reach thither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas being now satisfied with what he saw and heard of our Saviour's identity, and of the truth of his resurrection, exclaimed, in an ecstasy of holy admiration, "My Lord and my God! I admire thy kindness in bearing with my infirmities, and I am ashamed and humbled at the recollection of my previous unbelief." If Christ has not only condescended, Christians, to give you historical evidence of the truth of his resurrection, but has also, by his Word and Spirit, manifested himself to you in a manner that he does not unto the world, and caused you to feel the power of his resurrection in raising you to newness and holiness of life; we are confident you shall be filled with holy admiration of his condescending kindness, ashamed of your former unbelief, and that you will express these feelings in the language of Thomas, "our Lord and our God." But if at any time you wish to live by sense, and not by faith, remember that your faith must not rest upon sense or feeling, but upon the testimony of Christ in his Word. Though you have not seen Christ with your bodily eyes, yet believing in him, you will love him, and rejoice in him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

6thly. This exclamation implies a deep sense of obligation to our risen Redeemer, subjection to his authority, and devotedness to his service. Accordingly, Thomas addresses him as his Lord and God. Every Christian receives Christ in the whole extent of his mediatorial character, and while he listens to him as his instructor, and relies upon him as his atoning and interceding High Priest, he submits to him as his Sovereign, and obeys him as his Lord. Renouncing every other master who formerly had dominion over him, says, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do, for I wish to know thy will, that I may constantly obey it." My obligations to my redeeming Lord are so great, that although I may acknowledge

them, I am unable completely to discharge them. It is possible, indeed, to believe that Christ has bought us by his blood, and that we are his redeemed property, without feeling love unto him; and it is impossible to love him and not obey his commandments: for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commands are not grievous to them that love him. The doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ, as taught in Scripture, and believed by true Christians, is so far from weakening moral obligation, that it tends greatly to strengthen and confirm it; for to the obligations arising from creating goodness and providential care, it superadds the powerful obligations resulting from redeeming grace. It teaches us that being bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, we are indispensably bound to glorify him in our bodies and spirits, which are the Lord's. Those, therefore, who deny redemption by the blood of Christ, and maintain that he came into this world solely with a view to teach us the knowledge of divine truth, and to set a perfect pattern for our imitation, must admit that we are under the same obligations to the Saviour as to the ancient prophets; for they also were sent to instruct us in the knowledge of truth and duty, and being holy men of God set us an example for our imitation; and hence, we are informed in Scripture to take the prophets for an example of patience and submission to the will of God. But if we believe that Christ has done more for us than any prophet or apostle ever did or could do; if we believe that he gave himself a ransom for us, and has redeemed us by his blood; then it is obvious, we must be under the most powerful obligations to love and serve him. Has he died for us, and shall we not live unto him? Is our life the purchase of his death, and shall not these lives be spent in his service? Has he saved us from wrath to come, and shall we not devote ourselves to his honour and glory in the world? Now Thomas expresses his sense of obligation in the exclamation before us, and it is a sense of obligation which every true Christian must feel and acknowledge. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, not to release us from obligation to obey it as a rule of life, but he has delivered us from it as a law threatening death upon every transgression, that we may obey it as a rule of righteousness in the hand of our Mediator; for Christians are not without law unto God, but under the law to Christ. The truth is, that until we are reconciled unto God through faith in the blood of atonement, we must continue enemies to God, and as such must be incapable of loving and serving him. But when we are brought nigh unto God through the death of his Son; when his love is shed abroad in our hearts, and his law written upon them, we are prepared to acknowledge our obligations to redeeming grace, and disposed, nay, constrained by the love of Christ no longer to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. Do we then make void the law through grace? God forbid; yea, we establish the law. The law is magnified and made honourable by the perfect obedience and atoning death of Christ in the room of his people, and they are brought under new and additional obligations to obey it as a rule of righteousness to the glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer, to their own peace and comfort, and the edification of others around them.

But, lastly, this exclamation implies an honest and open profession of faith in Christ, and attachment to him as his redeeming Lord. While Thomas doubted the truth of our Lord's resurrection, and would not believe it upon the testimony of his brethren, he made no profession of faith in Christ, and, in doing so, he acted consistently with his views and feelings. But having obtained the satisfaction he desired, and being convinced of the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, he makes a public avowal of his faith in him and love to him as his Lord. He was neither ashamed nor afraid to make this profession; he regarded it as his duty and honour, and as what he owed to his Saviour, to his fellow-disciples, and to the world at large. It is also incumbent upon every Christian who believes in Christ and the great truths of the Gospel, to make a similar declaration, and to confess him before men. The time has been when such an open profession would expose Christians to reproach and persecution; but in the present period, and in the place of our residence, nothing of this kind is to be apprehended. On the contrary, a profession of faith in Christ, and the truths of his religion, is still held respectable by all whose esteem is desirable; and yet there are many who call themselves Christians, or wish to be regarded as such by others, who, from

timidity or some other causes, refrain from making a public avowal of their faith in Christ and attachment to him, by commemorating his death at the table of the Lord. Every true Christian, however, who believes in Christ, and loves him with supreme affection, will be ready upon every proper occasion, to come forward and declare his belief in him and dependence upon him. He will not be neutral in the cause of christianity, especially when he recollects the declaration of Christ, that "whosoever shall be ashamed of him and his words in this sinful generation, of him also will he be ashamed when he comes in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, and with all the holy angels. If his enemies are so bold as openly to avow their infidelity and hostility to the Gospel, shall the friends of Jesus be so fearful as not to profess their faith in him, and their attachment to the truths and the institutions of his religion? With the heart we must believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation. We do not recommend a hollow and hypocritical profession of faith in Christ, or a formal attendance upon religious ordinances, to save appearances and maintain a decent character in the world. We only affirm, that all who embrace the Gospel from conviction, who believe in the atoning death of Christ, and trust in him for salvation, should make a public profession of this faith, and avouch the Lord to be their God. Religion is no doubt a personal thing; but when this principle exists in the heart, it must appear in the conduct, and lead us to obey all the commandments of Christ, and especially his last and dying command, "Do ye this in remembrance of me." We find in the Gospel that some of the chief rulers believed on Christ, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Now, was this written for our imitation or our admonition? For our warning undoubtedly it was recorded, that we might guard against that timidity and love of honour which seduced them from the plain path of duty. Let us not, therefore, follow their example, or prefer the honour that cometh from man to the honour that cometh from God; but let us hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful who hath promised. This open profession of our faith and avowed attachment to our risen and exalted Redeemer, must be pleasing unto him, honourable to ourselves, and edifying unto others. By thus confessing him before men, we may humbly hope, that according to his own assurance, he will also confess us before his Father, and welcome us into the mansions of heavenly glory, saying, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

In conclusion, from what has been advanced, you may perceive that the doctrines of the Gospel, when cordially embraced, must have a powerful and purifying influence upon our temper and conduct. If we doubt or deny any of these essential principles, it must mar our comfort, retard our spiritual progress, and endanger our eternal happiness. None of the doctrines of Christianity are speculative points, taught merely to exercise our intellectual faculties, but they are holy doctrines, doctrines according to godliness, and when known and believed, never fail to sanctify the heart and regulate the conduct. Our christian duties are founded upon gospel doctrines, and naturally grow out of them; and, therefore, unless these doctrines are known and embraced, our duties as Christians cannot be properly performed, because we cannot feel the motives which ought to excite us to their performance. Thus if we reject the doctrines of our Lord's divinity and atonement; if we maintain that he is a mere man, and died only to set us an example of patience and submission to the will of God, the whole doctrine of the cross will become powerless and inefficient. But if we cordially believe that he is a divine person, that he died for our offences, and rose again for our justification, the astonishing love which our Saviour has thus manifested towards us must *constrain* us no longer to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

From what has been stated, in illustrating this subject, you may be led to inquire as individuals into your views, sentiments, and feelings, in reference to Jesus Christ, and you can in truth adopt the language of Thomas, and say unto him, "My Lord and my God." Are you fully convinced of the truth of our Lord's resurrection, and have you felt the power of his resurrection raising you to newness and holiness of life? Being risen with him, are you setting your affections on things that are above, not on

things on the earth? Are you fully satisfied as to the truth of our Lord's essential dignity and supreme divinity, and do you believe on the testimony of God, that he is his only begotten and well-beloved Son in whom he is well pleased? Have you received him by faith as set before you in the Gospel, and have you an humble hope of personal interest in him, and can you call him *your* Lord and *your* God? Do you rejoice in him as your Saviour and your Sovereign, and triumph in him as the God of your salvation? Do you glory in his cross and crown, and regard him as your all and in all? Do you feel a deep sense of obligation to him, and considering yourselves as his purchased property, do you glorify him in your bodies and spirits which are his? Are you not ashamed of him and of his words before a wicked and ungodly world, but ready upon every proper occasion, to profess your faith in him and his doctrines, to wait upon his ordinances, and maintain the honour of his law? If this is your real character, you have ground to conclude that you are possessed of the spirit which animated the Apostle when he uttered the exclamation of our text, that you are the genuine disciples of Christ, and interested in the privileges which belong to his people. See also from this subject, the unreasonableness of those who, with Thomas, demand sensible evidence of the truth of our Lord's resurrection, and will not receive it as a fact, though supported by sufficient credible testimony. They believe other facts upon the testimony of those who witnessed them; but they refuse to believe *this* fact upon the testimony of hundreds who witnessed it, and many of whom sealed their testimony with their blood. Though our Lord condescended to give unto his doubting Apostle the sensible evidence of his resurrection which he required, yet he reprehends him for his incredulity, and declared, (verse 19) "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The truth of our Lord's resurrection does not admit of demonstrative evidence, but the proof which is afforded us is quite sufficient to satisfy every candid inquirer; and, therefore, he will not indulge any sceptic in his unreasonable demands, but having given us satisfactory evidence of the truth, if we do not receive it, and believe in Christ as the true Messiah, who was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, we shall die in our sins.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D., Paisley.
SERMON by the Rev. NATHANIEL MORREN, A.M., Greenock.

THE DUTIES OF YOUNG MEN IN THE PRESENT CRISIS OF THE CHURCH;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH OF PAISLEY, ON MONDAY, 18TH MAY, 1835, AT THE REQUEST OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH SABBATH MORNING ASSOCIATION FOR RELIGIOUS EXERCISES,

By the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D.,
President of the Association.

"*And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries.*"—1 CHRON. xxii. 5.

DAVID had been a man of war from his youth, and it did not please the Most High God that he should be permitted to rear the temple at Jerusalem. His son Solomon, as the name imports, was a man of peace, and in his days and by his agency was the stately fabric reared and beautified. To David, nevertheless, belonged the important work of preparing the stones for the building, and of making all the necessary arrangements for the great and holy enterprise. On his son devolved the more direct business of the building; and to him, as being "young and tender," his venerable father commits the honoured charge. It was one of his most precious legacies; and the name of Solomon is celebrated in the annals of every age and of every land, as the builder of the "Lord's house which was at Jerusalem."

The infirmities of age do not excuse from public services; and yet they may be an apology for not engaging in those departments of duty which require peculiar alertness and activity. Aged members of the Church, the "Barzillais" and the "Mnasons," of venerable discipleship, may well be excused from descending into the arena of combat; while they may help the cause by their experience, their examples, and their prayers. It is a favourable sign when these aged ministers and members can look round on the fields of Zion, and see them occupied by a goodly band of warm-hearted and pious young persons, ready to rally round the cause of God, and to consecrate their talents at his altars. The standard which their feeble arms can no longer bear, they may resign with cheerful confidence, when they are assured that it shall be taken up and waved aloft by the vigorous grasp of their devoted sons.

I. That the present is a crisis in the history of our Church, must be admitted by every calm observer of the times. When attempts are perseveringly made to sap her foundations as a national institute; when the duty of kings and of the powers of this world to serve the God of heaven is openly denied; when a complete disruption betwixt the Church and the State is pertinaciously aimed at; and when men of all religions and of none are congregating together in one cause, is there not here something new, extraordinary, and ominous—something, in short, that marks an era of eventful magnitude? In other days we had

to struggle with the demon of persecution, and the fidelity of professors was put to a fiery trial. But in those days the line of demarcation was clearly drawn betwixt the conscientious adherents of evangelical truth and its open foes. *Now* it is grievous to think that so many of the avowed friends of the Redeemer's cause, amongst what are called evangelical dissenters, have separated from the friends of the same cause within the pale of the Church establishment, and joined the ranks of those with whom they have nothing in common save a reckless hatred to national religion. I am aware, that ever since the period of the Reformation, there have been individuals, and perhaps religious bodies also, who have opposed on principle the idea of a national religious institute. But it is a fact of no small moment, that even they did not contend for a total separation of the duties of men in their personal and in their official characters. It belongs to the present day to witness such a separation contended for, as essential to the existence and progress of genuine religion. The non-conforming ancestors of the present English dissenters would have most thankfully sat down under the broad shade of the establishment, had her terms of communion been a little more liberal; and the fathers of the secession in Scotland never dreamt of contending against the Scottish establishment *as such*. Perhaps we are not to be surprised, that men who have been long excluded from her benefits should at length come to look with jealousy and with hatred on the system which thus interposes a barrier in their way. Perhaps, too, the supposed reserve of the establishment and its friends may have had some influence in widening the separation. When we take into view also the political movements of Europe during the last fifty years, and the struggle for political privileges which was so long kept up in our own land, and has at length terminated in the attainment of those privileges, we need not wonder, however we may grieve, at the present aspect of things. The elements of a great movement had been long in the process of fermentation. Careful observers of the times had marked and anticipated a coming storm.

Unquestionably it is the irreligious aspect of the anti-establishment movement that forms the most revolting feature in the present crisis. The advocate of establishments appeals to principles of high and heavenly original; he is met by appeals to some of the very worst passions of our nature. The objections to establishments lie on the surface, and they carry a certain air of plausibility along with them. The arguments in their favour are mainly derived from sentiments with which corrupt human nature will not accord. "Religion is a matter of conscience, and conscience must be free. Let every man choose his religious creed, and profess it as he sees meet. Why should my conscience be burdened for another man's creed? All religions have something to say for themselves; and how are the kings and great ones of the earth to find out what is the truth? Nations as such have nothing to do save with man's physical wants. Let them attend to these, and leave the cause of God to defend itself." Such are the reasonings of anti-establishment men; and we say of them all that they are essentially infidel and irreligious. In reply to them, we make an appeal to the divinity of the Scriptures—the identity of the true religion under both dispensations—the sovereignty of God over the kingdoms of men—the headship of Christ over all—the moral character and responsibility of nations—and the prophetic descriptions of the millennial age. In the statement and application of these principles we find a most triumphant refutation of the anti-establishment scheme. But these are principles with which corrupt human nature has little in common; and hence it is, that in an age like the present, the number who will cordially enter into them is necessarily small. Political speculations and theories have eaten out the vitals of piety, and many who are nominally churchmen desert their professed principles at the bidding of the god of this world. The enemies of the Church know this full well, and they have sagacity to take advantage of it. The policy of the scheme is beyond question; its christianity is quite a different matter.

The present aspect of things would not be so portentous could we think that infidelity and popery were advancing, *solely* because anti-establishment men had paid court to them. This, however, is by no means the case. Lamentable, indeed, is it to think that professors of godliness should in any circumstances make common cause with its insidious and determined foes; an yet a melancholy delusion of this kind we might expect by its grossness to destroy itself. The painful truth we cannot disguise; that, independently of the present contro-

versy, infidel and anti-christian principles have been making, and are even now making fearful ravages on all that is valuable in the civil and religious interests of this country. Blasphemous publications of all kinds and at all prices are circulated among the people with restless avidity. The periodical press is, with a few bright exceptions, the vehicle of sceptical or latitudinarian principles. The literature of the country is polluted at the fountain-head. Popery has allied itself with infidelity, and radicalism has fostered both. All this sad array of hostile forces is independent of the present controversy, but it exerts upon it a very important influence. Whatever endangers the stability of religion itself, must by the same process endanger the existence of those churches which are the accredited representatives of religion, and the agents in its promulgation. *They* are no true friends of an establishment who look on it as a political device to keep the people in awe. The true design of an establishment is to diffuse the knowledge of religious truth most effectually through the land, and to provide as extensively as possible the means of social worship; and, just in proportion as it secures these great ends, will it carry along with it the best wishes of the good, and the execrations of the bad. Applying such a test as this to the Church of Scotland, we bring out a creditable result. Unprejudiced men who love the truth, and desire its advancement, would contemplate the overthrow of that church as a great national catastrophe. Infidels who "hate the light, and love darkness," desiderate its overthrow as the removal of a great stumbling-block in their way. A nation honouring Christ! a public standard for God and his glory lifted up throughout the length and breadth of the land! infidels cannot endure it. Individual testimonies they may succeed in putting to silence; but the national voice speaking clear and strong in favour of evangelical truth, is a witness whose verdict they cannot evade.

Our views of the present crisis are not complete or correct, so long as we do not take under our notice the conduct of the defenders of the Church, as well as that of its opposers. Never was there a time when the friends of the Church summoned such an array of talent, of learning, of zeal, and of perseverance, into the field of combat. "This is the doing of the Lord;" and it affords a fair ground of inference that he does not intend to cast away that Church, around which he has thrown such bulwarks. If I entertain any fears at all, they arise out of two considerations, the grounds and reasons of which may God in great mercy speedily remove! The one is, that the reformation of the Church has not yet occupied that prominent place in public view which has been assigned, and justly, to her defence and her enlargement. The second is, that I do not yet see any clearly defined symptoms of what may be termed, "a revival of the work of the Lord." Much external machinery is set, or is setting in motion; but where are our acts of deep humiliation? our earnest wrestlings with God? our pointed testimonies against sin? our growing strictness in family duties? our impartiality and purity of discipline? our burning zeal for the public interests of the Church all over the world? I notice these things not to damp, but to quicken zeal. A right estimate of the crisis of events embraces friends as well as foes. It marks the shades as well as the brighter lines. It "tries the spirits." And he is an Utopian visionary who sees on the one side nothing but Arcadian fields, on which there beams a perpetual sunshine; and on the other nothing save images of terror, and the haunts of desolation and of death.

II. The present crisis calls for peculiar duties from all the members and friends of the Church; but my present business is with young men. And I rejoice in thinking that they have happily anticipated me in the practical application of the primary duty which the present aspect of things points out. They have resolved to take a serious and devotional view of the whole theme, and to look upon it through another medium than that of cold and cheerless speculation. The "Sabbath Association," whose members I now address, is not a society for debate or for controversy; it has for its object the culture of the affections, the exercises of the heart. Controversy is, indeed, in present circumstances, unavoidable; and in every age truth has had to fight its way against opponents. We speak not one word, therefore, against controversy when properly conducted, and when directed to the defence of truth. But we contend for piety as the guide, the directory, the controlling and presiding principle in all debates which have religion for their subject, and the glory of God for their end. No good symptom is it in a society professedly christian, when its

members descend to the arena in another spirit than that of the great master whom they wish to serve. No good feature would it be in your Association were its members leagued to defend the Church as a human institution merely, and were their meetings and their exercises designed only to exhibit specimens of courage in attack, and pugnacity in defence. No; young men are the rising hopes of the Church, and on them depends the character of the coming age. Their affections, naturally warm, must be engaged on the things of the Spirit. Their hearts, naturally impressible, must be touched as with "a live coal from the altar." Their powers, sharpened it may be for contest, must be tempered by the holy influences of grace. A devotional spirit must spread its hallowed influence around them; and they must recommend the cause by godliness in temper as well as in principle. "Let us take heed," says one of the fathers of the Church, "lest, in defending the doctrine of the Trinity, we offend the Trinity themselves." You are associated together, my young friends, for purposes of prayer and christian activity. The object is praiseworthy; may it be prosecuted in a corresponding spirit! Happy will that church be whose young members, numerous as the dew of the morning, thus "bind their sacrifices with cords to the horns of Jehovah's altar."

A *second* duty is, to study with diligence the points at issue. Ignorance on such a subject is not creditable, and more especially when the means of information are so amply supplied. In volumes and in tracts, in magazines and in periodicals of all kinds, in public lectures and in society meetings, information the most extensive and valuable has been furnished; and young men may improve their understandings, and widen the circle of their ideas, by availing themselves of the treasures thus supplied. The members of voluntary churches are indefatigable in their efforts to give and to receive information that may tell *against* the Church. And why should the members of that church which is thus assailed be indolent and supine? Whence is it that apathy has seized on *them* as its victims? Our Church had enjoyed a lengthened repose, and her sons had slumbered secure beneath the broad shade of national faith. They felt no alarm, and no man had an interest in disturbing their repose. The scene has changed. A crisis has arrived, a keen contest has arisen, and the question in debate is, Shall the Church of our fathers be preserved in her immunities and in her rights? or shall she be thrown aside as a rotten branch? A question of no mean magnitude, and every one is interested in its right solution. I know not a more hopeful sign of a church than when her young members bring their minds with moral courage to the subject, and by diligent reading and inquiry fit themselves for becoming not "expert debaters," but calm and well-informed defenders of the bulwarks of Zion.

In prosecuting such inquiries, you will find it of vast use to keep in mind the *main question*. We are not at issue with voluntaries on voluntaryism itself. Every church must in its primary element be voluntary, just as every government and every society hitherto known among men must be voluntary. The question is not, Shall men be at liberty to patronise religion? It rather is, Shall men in official stations, and whose patronage is on that very account all the more valuable, be *deprived* of that liberty? The question is not, Shall men individually, and in their private walks, countenance the cause of God? It rather is, Shall men, when associated together in communities and states, be *released* from all such obligation? The point at issue then is simply this—the national recognition of God, or the national rejection of him! Voluntaryism pleads, that all religions are alike in the eye of magistracy, and that he is the best legislator and ruler who can look upon them all with the most perfect indifference! Voluntaryism says, kingdoms *as such* have nothing to do with God. God himself comes forth from his inaccessible glory and proclaims, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve me shall perish!" Keep steadily in your eye the direct tendency of the reasonings of the Voluntaries to release nations *as such* from all connexion with Him who gave them their being, and by whom alone "kings reign." Let all the religious establishments of Europe be levelled in the dust, and what will be the position of the kingdoms of Europe? Christianity will be blotted from their statute books, and infidelity and atheism will be dominant.

A *third* duty which I would recommend is, to make yourselves well acquainted with the history and the doctrines of the Church of Scotland. If ignorance on the establishment controversy is not creditable, igno-

rance on the history and doctrines of the Church itself is more discreditable still. Her members have no cause to be ashamed either of the one or of the other. If you look back upon her history, you behold her emerging from amid the darkness of popery into the clear sunshine of evangelical truth; maintaining a noble contest with the arts of court intrigue and a worldly hierarchy; bidding away from her a corrupt scheme of ecclesiastical polity, and taking her stand on the broad vantage ground of scriptural truth; entering the furnace of persecution with calm dignity, and "walking in it" under the guidance of her glorious Head; triumphing over popery and arbitrary power at the era of the glorious Revolution, and establishing herself anew in the hearts and affections of the great majority of the nation. You behold her glory obscured first by courtly devices, and soon thereafter by the reimposition of that yoke which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear. You mark the rise and progress and results of secessions from her pale; and the melancholy blight which for more than half a century settled upon her fairest fields. You see her again rousing herself to action, awakening to the claims of pure doctrine and evangelical freedom; infusing a greater energy into her pastoral ministrations, and widening her domains on the right hand and on the left. If you look to her doctrine as embodied in her standards, you find it to be the same which has been incorporated into all the confessions of Protestant Europe. It embraces the scheme of grace in all its vast extent and relative connexions; the lost state of man, in consequence of the fall; the recovery of man by the interposition, incarnation, sufferings and death of the second person of the ever blessed Trinity; justification and free acceptance through the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer, and by the instrumentality of faith; sanctification through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit; and the necessity of holiness not as the ground of hope, but as the means of preparation for the heavenly bliss. These great cardinal principles are held forth prominently in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of our Church; and it is matter of joy, that in adherence to these, as articles of belief, the great body of Dissenters from the Church do cordially concur with us. Is it your desire, then, young men, to follow out most successfully the purposes of your union? Then remember your own public declarations on this subject as incorporated in your "regulations," and be not satisfied with their verbal recognition as scriptural principles. Study them well—in their evidences, as exhibited in the Scriptures; in their connexion with the one great system in which they all combine; in their practical bearings on the hearts and consciences of human beings; and in their historical development in the civil and religious annals of our land. I have little confidence in that attachment to the Church of Scotland which is founded in any thing short of a real love to her doctrine, her discipline, her government; and those show little of that love who do not ponder her history, and trace the dealings of God with her children. Let your members be familiar with the lives of Knox and Melville, and with the histories of Stevenson, and Calderwood, and Wodrow. Above all, study the doctrines of our Church, in connexion with their "proofs" from the oracles of God. "Hold fast the form of sound words;" and, in an age of novelty in opinion, "ask for the old paths." Avoid the love of speculation on religious doctrine. Take *practical views* of the truth; and never forget that the doctrines of grace, as incorporated in our Confession, are "doctrines according to godliness."

A *fourth* duty I would inculcate on young men in the present crisis of the Church is, holy and humble activity. By activity, I mean the putting forth your energies in the way most likely to be useful to promote the great end of every church, whether established or voluntary—the glory of God and the spiritual good of men. That activity is "holy," when it is prompted and controlled by holy motives, and by a righteous and truly christian spirit. It is "humble," when it guards against all unnecessary and ostentatious display, and seeks just to do good and nothing more. There are *various modes* in which this holy and humble activity of young men may be displayed. It may diffuse information on religion in general, and on the Church in particular, by means of books, and magazines, and tracts. It may conduct, or assist in conducting Sabbath schools for the religious instruction of the young. It may visit the "fatherless and the widows in their affliction," and be the almoner of christian bounty, and the affectionate soother of imbecile and indigent age. It may seek out the haunts of neglected children, and, by means of infant

and juvenile schools, bring them within the range of useful and christian instruction. It may even form district associations for the erection of churches. It may distribute the lively oracles of the living God among the families of the destitute. In a word, there is an ingenuity in devising useful plans, and a promptness in executing them, which well become the rising hopes of our Church. Let that ingenuity be directed by the wisdom and experience of those who may be older than yourselves; and let that promptness in execution be tempered with the caution and prudence which christian discretion will ever command. Eye the glory of God in all your aims. Ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God in all your proceedings; and be true to yourselves in the principles you have thus laid down in your primary manifesto: "No man who reads the history of this age by the light of the lamp of the sanctuary can fail to observe, that irreligion and unrighteousness, by poisoning the streams of truth, and inducing a growing disregard for things spiritual and divine, are paving the way for deserved and threatened judgments; and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every christian patriot not only to exemplify his personal decision of character and holiness of principle, but also in imitation of the saints of other days, and in accordance with the Spirit of sacred command, to arouse his fellow-disciples from spiritual apathy, and engage with them in supplicating the averting of wrath, and in imploring the outpourings of the Spirit of grace. Conscious that it is the effectual operation of that Spirit alone that can prostrate the pride of Satan's dominion, and make this world effulgent with the beauties of vital godliness; and conscious that that regenerating influence shall be granted in answer to united, fervent, persevering prayer, our great aim is, to take up the language of Isaiah, to cry aloud and spare not: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old."

I would notice, in the fifth and last place, the infinite importance of consistency of character. On the steadiness of your walk before the world and before the Church, the success of your efforts will mainly depend. One of your primary regulations is, to watch over one another, and not to "suffer sin" on any that may be called a brother. This is as it should be; but remember that there may very possibly exist a spirit of censorship, while there is little of the spirit of self-jealousy. They who profess to be the guardians of each other would require to be peculiarly guarded in their own tempers and habits. In the houses of your parents, let nothing interfere to prevent the due discharge of domestic duties. Let father and mother be the objects of affectionate and dutiful regard. Let brothers and sisters dwell together in unity. Never let it be said, that the calls of the Church from without are allowed to interfere with the calls of the family from within. In your social meetings for conference and for prayer in the mornings of Sabbath, let not their avocations trench upon the time sacred to the worship of the family and of the sanctuary; and, in your week evening meetings, let your twelfth regulation be rigidly adhered to, that they "must ever be dismissed by ten o'clock." "Let not your good be evil spoken of." "Young men we would exhort to be sober-minded." Let no talents, however splendid; let no information, however extensive and accurate; let no zeal for the Church, however flaming; let no powers of argument or of eloquence, however imposing, be held as substitutes for solid piety and strict temperance. Be very regular and devout in your attendance on the ordinances of the sanctuary; and be ever ready to strengthen the hands of your ministers by every effort in your power. To you, as the rising hopes of the Church, we look with fond anticipation as the probable successors of more aged workmen who must speedily leave this earthly scene, and rest from their labours. Disappoint not our hopes. Be vigilant in resisting the wiles of an evil world. Let no ungodly companionship mislead you from the right path. In the prospect of settling in the world, and of becoming masters of houses that you can call your own, resolve that wherever *you* may have a tent, God shall have an altar. Let a becoming modesty, a humble diffidence, ever characterize you. The credit not of "your own company" alone, but of the Church and of the Gospel, does in some sort hang suspended on you. Would to God I could address all the youthful auxiliaries of our cause in the language of the venerable disciple whom Jesus loved: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

In conclusion, I would remark, that an enlarged, and liberal, and truly catholic spirit well becomes the youthful champions of our Zion. Decision of principle, as members of the Established Church, does not prevent the culture of a kindly and christian spirit towards those who are of different sentiments from you on the subject of establishments. The violent antipathy which so many have shown to our Church does, indeed, warrant our doing our duty just in our own way; but it does not warrant the sanguinary denunciations of party malignity. We can afford to be generous. We can respect the rights of conscience in others, while we vindicate our own. We are not warranted to unchristianize every one who does not think with us; nor are we entitled to unchurch every society over which the banner of national favour does not wave. Far from you be that proud and overbearing churchmanship, which has no tears to shed over a dying world, and no sympathies in common with the great missionary enterprise. "The house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries;" and her builders must be men of enlarged and truly catholic views. Entertaining these views, they will exult in the opening glories of the millennial age; while, looking round on the varied sections of the christian world, they will give utterance to the benevolent prayer, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. Amen!"

THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. NATHANIEL MORREN, A.M.,
Minister of the North Parish, Greenock.

"*Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.*"—Acts xvii. 2.

(*Concluded from No.* 152,* *page* 384.)

In a former discourse from this passage, we remarked, that it involves the assertion of the fundamental principle of Protestantism—the right of private judgment as to the meaning of the Word of God. And, in vindicating that principle at length, we showed that the opposite scheme followed by the adherents of Rome, *namely*, that of taking their views of Scripture from the Church is,

I. *Impracticable*, because it is impossible, independently of the study of Scripture, to ascertain what the sentiments of the true Church are.

II. *Unnecessary*, on account of the provision which God has made in the acknowledged clearness of his written revelation, and the promised influences of his Holy Spirit to every humble, prayerful inquirer. In reference to the latter point, it may by some be alleged, that the operation of the Spirit of God upon the human soul is an interference with the free exercise of reason, similar to that of which we complain in the Church of Rome. But a moment's reflection may convince us that the two cases are not parallel. The influence of the Holy Spirit, though it operates mysteriously and in ways unknown to us, does not in the least coerce the powers of the soul; it merely enlightens, strengthens, directs them, so as to secure our rational and cordial conviction. But the pretended authority of the Church of Rome does coerce reason as if by brute force, and would compel the mind

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* Since the appearance of the *first* part of this sermon, the substance of the whole argument has been given by the author in the Appendix to his lately published work, entitled, "*Biblical Theology*, &c.; being an attempt to exhibit, in continuous and systematic connexion, the critical interpretation of Scripture, and its immediate doctrinal results."

to receive what she calls the true meaning of Scripture; not by encouraging us to examine for ourselves, that we may come to the same conclusion by the same, or a similar train of reasoning, but by commanding us to believe, simply because she says it is so.

III. The scheme of taking our sense of Scripture from any church, even the true Church, as it is *impracticable* and *unnecessary*, so it is *unscriptural*. It is altogether without sanction from the Word of God. This will have partly appeared from what has been already said, but it deserves separate and serious consideration. The Romish Church, if she has any well-grounded claim to dictate authoritatively the meaning of Scripture, must be able to substantiate that claim out of Scripture itself; and, accordingly, to Scripture she endeavours to appeal. But observe the inconsistency of which she is guilty in so doing! The leading fundamental principle with which she sets out is, that no private individual has either the right or the ability to interpret Scripture. And yet when a Protestant demands her authority for this usurpation of private right, she sends him to Scripture for it; ay, and must allow him to exercise his own private judgment as to those passages of Scripture upon which she founds her claim. Is it not manifest, that in so acting, (and yet she cannot act otherwise,) she just gives up the point at issue, and tacitly admits, that, with regard to a large class of passages, some of them the most difficult to be found in the Bible, it is to private judgment and that alone that the interpretation must be left? Roman Catholics must of necessity admit the exercise of reason in all the complicated questions connected with the foundation of their system; but as soon as you shall have got a certain length in the inquiry, your own judgment must be laid aside as no longer of any use: as soon, for example, as you shall have had the sagacity to discover (what certainly does not appear at first sight) that, by the rock on which Christ's Church is built, is meant the Pope of Rome; or that a council of ignorant immoral bishops in the dark ages were infallible interpreters of Scripture: from that moment an extinguisher is put upon your mental perceptions; the rational man disappears, and reason, judgment, conscience, are swallowed up and lost in the ocean of Romish infallibility.

In truth, these opponents of the right of private judgment betray a palpable inconsistency, in condescending to argue with us at all; for, by so doing, they virtually give up the very point for which we contend; more especially when they *reason* with us *out of the Scriptures* as to the meaning of those passages which they adduce, in order to disprove our right *to reason out of the Scriptures* at all. If I am allowed to interpret those parts of Scripture independently of any human authority, and if I can arrive at a true sense of the texts concerning infallibility without an infallible guide, why may I not as easily ascertain the sense of other texts as plain as these, without such an interpreter? For, most assuredly, if the authority of the Romish Church be found in Scripture itself, it is not there set forth in such legible characters as would make it obvious to common minds. Let us examine a few of the passages that are commonly brought forward in proof of this power:—"The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." "Lo, I am with you always, even to the consummation of all things." "The Holy Ghost shall abide with you for ever," &c. Now, with regard to these and all such like passages, what do they really prove? They certainly do show that God will always have a church upon the earth; that the persons who shall constitute his true invisible church shall be taught by the Holy Ghost; that, in all essential doctrines of the *common salvation*, they shall be led into all truth; but beyond this they prove nothing; and he must be an ingenious sophist who can show that they refer to the clergy alone, and not the lay-members of the Church; or that they give to the members of the true Church the right to dictate to their brethren who shall come after them regarding their faith, and to say, "You shall not become Christians in the way in which we became Christians, namely, by inquiring and judging for yourselves, with the aid of God's Spirit; but you shall thus believe, merely because we have thus believed before you." But it may, perhaps, be urged, is it not said in Scripture, "Obey those who have the rule over you?" that is, according to the Romish

gloss, "your pastors and prelates." "He that heareth you heareth me." If this proves any thing to the purpose, it proves too much; for it would go to show that a single bishop or priest has the infallibility of an apostle; whereas the Church of Rome, in this country at least, denies the personal infallibility even of its visible head. And it will require other passages of Scripture (and here the Romanist completely fails) to prove, that though the individuals are fallible when taken separately, they are, nevertheless, infallible as a whole. And it would, moreover, be necessary to point out how the christian people are to get at this supposed infallibility, so as to make it available for their daily interpretation of Scripture. The universal body of pastors throughout the Church have never met, and it is almost impossible they ever can meet. Nay, all the *bishops* in Christendom have never met together; and a representative infallibility of the dispersed Church is a mere fiction. But it is manifest, that some of the passages above quoted must be held to refer exclusively to the Apostles, who, *as to their inspiration*, had no successors, either in individuals or in bodies of men, the substance of their divine instructions having been handed down to us in their writings; while other passages quoted are seen to apply either to the respect due to the pastoral office, or to the exercise of church discipline. It is the latter that is obviously alluded to in a well-known and oft-cited passage, (which has no reference whatever to matters of faith, but relates solely to differences between christian brethren): "Tell thy complaint against thy brother to the church, and if he refuse to hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man or a publican"—*i. e.*, let him be expelled from christian communion. But it is evident, that the power here given to the office-bearers of the Church, to exclude incorrigible offenders (without which no society can exist), is a very different thing from a power to decide and dictate on matters of belief. Besides, the language clearly implies, that the tribunal, to which recourse is to be had under injury, is an accessible tribunal; but the Church universal, where, according to the Catholic, infallibility is lodged, is not accessible;—no man can tell his complaint to the Church universal, and consequently to it the passage in question cannot possibly apply. The same reasoning will be found to hold good, with respect to a passage frequently adduced on this subject, from the Book of Deuteronomy, respecting the power vested in the priests and Levites, to give judgment in disputed cases. That was merely a court of appeal for the better administration of justice between man and man; it had nothing to do with principles of religious belief; for, as to these, the only rule to every Jew was, "to the law and to the testimony." The Sanhedrim at no period laid claim to infallibility; or, if it be said that they nevertheless possessed it, be it never forgotten, that it was their judgment that led to the crucifixion of the Lord of glory.

But it has been asked, Is not a judge as necessary in determining religious controversies, as in civil and criminal affairs? Let us follow out the illustration which this question suggests. The acts of our legislature are published without note or comment, in the vernacular language of the country, and whoever is able to procure them, either in whole or in part, is at liberty to possess them. There are no officers in our country whose functions correspond with the assumed prerogatives of the Roman Catholic clergy, as the authorized depositaries and infallible interpreters of the laws, *in the first instance*. Neither lawyers nor magistrates are recognised as sustaining that character. Every man is allowed to read the acts of Parliament, to judge of their meaning for himself, in the exercise of his own understanding (using the aid of others if he chooses,) and to act according to his views of their import, being at the same time accountable to the ruling power for whatever conduct he may pursue in consequence of the explanation he attaches to them. Should he err in theory and practice he is brought to trial; when convicted, he pleads his construction of the law as warranting his deeds. The case is then, but not till then, referred to the judge, who, acting in the name and on behalf of the sovereign, pronounces the interpretation erroneous, and the criminal must abide the result of his mistake and consequent misconduct. So it is in the moral government of God. He has promulgated his law in writing, and he wills that all his subjects should possess it, and read it, in their own tongue, promising his good Spirit as their guide. He has appointed ministers of religion as helps to the understanding of this law; but as they are not infallible, taken individually, or collectively—as we are all personally responsible for our creed and con-

duct to Him that made us, it is at our peril that we refuse to take the statute-book of heaven into our own hands and examine it for ourselves. If, however, in the use of this right, and neglecting the directions and cautions the Bible itself has given for its proper exercise, a person grossly misinterprets the revealed will of God, and acts contrary to its discoveries, he must answer for it at the tribunal of the only infallible Judge. The disciple of heresy and immorality may then refer to his interpretation of Scripture in vindication of his offence, and may plead the opinion of his priest, or his minister, as having sanctioned that interpretation; but God will pronounce him guilty of reckless and culpable ignorance; and he shall be condemned as a "man of corrupt mind," one who had "perverted the right ways of the Lord," "a reprobate concerning the faith."

But we observe farther, that the practice of receiving blindly and implicitly our religious opinions from others, is *unscriptural*, inasmuch as it not only obtains no countenance from Scripture, but is directly opposed to it.

1st. Such a practice stands in express contradiction to the many distinct exhortations given to the laity to "search the Scriptures." For what conceivable purpose are they to search, if it be not that they may find? Why command them to peruse a volume which is admitted to be the grand rule of faith, if they are not allowed to exercise their own judgment as to its meaning? Does not such a scheme necessarily make the Bible to every Roman Catholic *a dead letter?* Suppose one were to hand you a communication, the contents of which are to you most important, but were in giving it to say, "You are at liberty to *read* this, but you are not free to *understand* it in any sense different from that in which it has been understood by many other persons who lived ages ago." I ask, could you read such a document with comfort, with profit, with intelligence? Would you not be continually saying to yourself, "I think I do understand this; but what signifies it whether I understand it or not, seeing my understanding of it will go for nothing, unless it be the same as that of the many who lived ages since, and to whose interpretation I can now have no certain access?" Is it not manifest, that the Catholic layman, in reading Scripture, can obtain no real instruction, either for faith or practice, but when he is sure that his interpretation is that of Holy Mother Church? Must he not suspend his judgment as to the sense, lest haply it might be at variance with that given by the Church? And suppose that he repairs to the priest, and asks him what explanation or comment the Church has given of any particular portion of Scripture, the priest, if he is honest, must tell him that the Church of Rome, *as a church*, has never issued an authoritative commentary upon a single book, nor even a single chapter of the Bible. And thus the inquirer finds, that the permission given him to read the Bible is a cruel mockery. He is first told that he must understand the Bible, as the Church understands it; and when he seeks for the Church's interpretation of the Bible, he finds there is no such thing in existence.

2dly. To yield up the right of private judgment is farther condemned in Scripture, by the positive and explicit injunctions given to assert and exercise it. "Prove all things;" that is, bring them to the test; which presupposes that the test is one known and accessible to all. "Try the spirits (or teachers) whether they be of God." "I speak unto men of understanding; judge ye what I say." "Not that we domineer, or lord it over you as to your faith; for by faith (as the result of enlightened conviction) ye stand." "Be ready to give to every man that asketh, *a reason* of the hope that is in you." All these passages express or imply the *right of private judgment;* and we maintain, that it was by nothing but the legitimate exercise of this right that the primitive believers became Christians. Had the Romanist scheme been the true one, we should doubtless have read in the Acts of the Apostles, that as soon as a church was formed at Jerusalem, the only argument that was afterwards employed in addressing Jews or Gentiles was this: "The Church of Jerusalem, the mother and mistress of all churches, takes certain views of the Word of God; and as she is infallible, you must implicitly follow her interpretation." But do we once hear of any such argument having been used? No! Such a claim on the part of the first Christians, to impose their faith on those who should enter the Church after them, was never dreamt of by these humble followers of the Lord. Even the practice of the inspired Apostles was not so much to enforce authoritative dogmas, to which they demanded implicit faith,

as (wherever it was practicable) *to reason* with men, with Gentiles, upon the *works* of nature and the *facts* of revelation, and with their own countrymen, the Jews, out of their ancient *Scriptures*. Now, when we read the Gospel, we hear Christ; when we read the epistles, we hear his Apostles; and there is no conceivable reason why we should not by this means become Christians, in the same way as they who listened to their oral instructions, and who, like the Bereans, received their words with understanding and with all readiness of mind, while they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. It is a pitiful subterfuge to say that this referred only to the Old Testament Scripture. Is it so, then, that a Jew enjoys higher privileges than a Christian? that his religion is more rational and intellectual, permitting the free exercise of private thought? Is it so that he is expected to search his own Scriptures before he can believe ours; but that as soon as he is convinced of the divine authority of the New Testament, he is restrained from finding in it the principles of his new faith, and must blindly and submissively receive them from some other quarter?

IV. The scheme in question is as *irrational* as it is *unscriptural;* it interferes with the exercise of reason, violates the rights of conscience, renders genuine faith an impossibility, and goes to destroy all sense of personal accountability. Where is the exercise of reason upon such a scheme? The faculty of reason, though greatly perverted through sin, is nevertheless a noble endowment from the bountiful Creator, and a gift that has certainly been imparted in order to be exercised. As the *natural* rights of all men are equal, all have the prerogative of exercising this faculty of reason to the same extent. If all possess an equal right to liberty of body, not less have all the unalienable privilege of liberty of thought. Indeed, it is well for the honour of human nature, for the intellectual and moral improvement of the species, that the human mind is so formed, that if it be once enlightened into the knowledge of its own prerogatives and powers, it can, and will refuse to let its motions be controlled by any extraneous influence. The body may be put under restraint during the whole term of its earthly existence; and, by the force of terror, men may destroy liberty of speech and liberty of action. But the immortal spirit scorns such durance. No created power, no kingly or priestly dominion can invade the impenetrable recesses of the human heart. There is in the spirit of man that goeth upward an elastic spring, which bursts asunder the chains that would enslave it, and enables it to soar aloft into the regions of intelligence and feeling. And is it not the duty of all to take care that this noble faculty be not by them on the one hand abused, or on the other hand degraded and enslaved under any pretence whatever, but that it be employed for the purposes for which the gracious Giver has designed and bestowed it? How, without using our own reason in reading any production, can we attain to a clear perception of the meaning, or have a satisfactory belief in what it contains? The man who is a slave in his reason, in the very centre of his being, will have all his faculties in bondage, all his mental powers unnerved, and will be, without knowing it, a slave in his whole conduct; while he who is free in the inmost sanctuary of his soul, looks freely and boldly around him, and becomes disposed for every thing great and good.

But the exercise of reason, in connexion with religion, is especially necessary, because there is involved an individual, moral *responsibility* to be found in no other concern of life. On other topics I may safely adopt without inquiry and without conviction the opinions of others; but to God, and to God only, am I accountable for my religious opinions, and no power on earth has a right to interfere between God and my conscience. Subject the conscience of a man to any but his Maker; deprive him of liberty of thought in understanding the divine will, or of liberty of action in following out his conviction of its meaning, and you take from him a portion, if not the whole, of that free agency which is essential to final accountability. If he is not left free to form from Scripture his own religious principles, then can he no longer be considered a responsible moral agent.

We deny not that this right has been abused, and must ever be liable to abuse, when intrusted to a sinful creature like man. But no occasional disorders that may arise from its perversion can ever justify the unrighteous attempt to suppress it. What blessing of heaven has not been abused by man? but a very tyro in reasoning knows that the abuse of a thing is no valid argument against its legitimate use. Because

your eyes may sometimes have deceived you, must they be put out? because the assertion of civil liberty has often led to dreadful excesses, will you sell yourself as a slave? because the grace of God is turned by many into licentiousness, will you reject that grace altogether? because you have once come to a wrong decision, will you resolve henceforth never to think for yourself? or should not the circumstance rather render you for the future more careful in forming your judgment? Can the Roman Catholic maintain that his system is productive of no serious evils? If we would view it in its true light, let us look at the effects which it has produced in countries the most thoroughly Catholic—in Spain, or Portugal, or Italy, the centre of their boasted unity. There, where the system is in full and undisguised operation, and not counteracted by the vicinity and example of Protestants, the minds of the common people are in a state of the most abject bondage. The favourite sentiment of the Church is, that ignorance is the mother of devotion; and the well-known policy of priestcraft is to keep the minds of the laity as much as possible empty, in order that they may be fitter receptacles for whatever superstition may have to instil. Is there not in Catholic countries generally a practical disregard to the authority of the Bible? And is it not literally to the great multitude *a sealed book*; while there is substituted for it that monstrous undefined thing (a remnant of the barbarism of the dark ages) called *implicit faith*, which consists in believing every thing, and knowing nothing—not so much as the terms of the proposition believed. Is it not a lamentable fact, that all this tells fearfully upon the morals of the people, who, furnished with this succedaneum, lose very much the feeling of accountable creatures, and shift off their responsibility on their spiritual guides, to whose keeping they deliver up soul and conscience. And is it not evident, that, by thus opposing revelation to reason, the Church of Rome virtually destroys the authority, and impairs the influence of both? For, to use the words of an English philosopher, she is engaged in the attempt of persuading men to put out their eyes, that they may the better receive the remote light of an invisible star through her telescope.

Now, if these things are so; if the plan of blindly receiving the sense of Scripture from the Church is *impracticable*, and even were it practicable, is *unnecessary*; if it stands opposed to the plainest testimonies of *Scripture*, and to the obvious dictates of right reason, it will follow that the only legitimate method of interpreting the Bible, is by the exercise of the private judgment. And here it is pre-eminently true that, in order to the proper enjoyment of the right, it must be regarded as an imperative *duty*. Our object has not been to attack, in the spirit of partisanship, those from whom in this point we differ; but to stir up the minds of Protestants to the exercise of that privilege which was in former days the distinguishing badge of their profession—*the diligent and prayerful examination of the Word of God*. If any who bear the Protestant name are neglecting the study of the Sacred Volume, or with indolent supineness are content to receive blindly their creed from others, then the name of Protestant, of which they boast, is in their case an empty sound; and the conscientious but misguided Catholic, the conscientious but darkened heathen, will surely rise up in judgment to condemn them in the day of Christ.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT CAMERON, East Kilbride.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM WELSH, Falkirk.

MAN'S IGNORANCE OF FUTURITY;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, EAST KILBRIDE, ON THE FIRST SABBATH OF 1835,

By the Rev. ROBERT CAMERON,
Minister of that Church.

"*Thou knowest not what a day shall bring forth.*"—PROV. xxvii. 1.

I KNOW not, my friends, how I could more appropriately commence my address to you this day than in the current language of the season. With all the solicitude and anxiety of a pastor, with all the affection and love of a sincere friend, I wish you a happy new year. My aged friends, I wish you a happy new year. I cannot, I dare not, wish you the restoration of youth and strength, but I wish you the blessings of sanctified age, I wish you may experience the promise performed, that God is bearing and carrying you, as in the days of old; and when you put off the frail worn-out clay tabernacle, I wish you an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. My young friends, I wish you a happy new year, and many new years, many happy years, if it be consistent with the will of God, and conducive to your good, after this enfeebled body of mine shall be at rest in the grave. I wish you the hallowed remembrance of your Creator in the days of your youth. I wish you an abundant increase of grace and knowledge. I wish you the supporting influence of divine consolation under any trials which may befall you, and the sanctifying influences of the Spirit on the enjoyments with which you may be favoured. I wish you increasing usefulness in the station in which God has placed you on earth, and growing meetness for, in due time, entering on a nobler sphere of employment and enjoyment in heaven. To all of you, of whatever age you may be, who have already known and felt the power of religion in your soul, and we trust many of you are in that state, oh! that we might say to all of you, I wish a happy new year. May it be to you a year of abundant blessings, a year of a thousand, yea, of ten thousand comforts and consolations! and to you, if any such are present, who are yet unacquainted with the one thing needful, even to you I wish a happy new year. May it be to you a year of conviction, conversion, repentance, and faith; then it will be indeed a happy new year, and you will have ample cause to look back upon the solemnities of its first sabbath with gratitude and joy.

But I must cease from expressing any more wishes when I think of my text, which so forcibly reminds us of our complete ignorance of the future; ignorance so great that we cannot tell what even a day may bring forth. This is a truth which is universally acknowledged; but as to the prac-

tical influence which it ought to have on the conduct, seems to be almost as universally forgotten; yet it is our wisdom to have it constantly in remembrance; and for this reason the Word of God frequently brings it before us. Amid our congratulations, then, it becomes us to pause, lest, forgetting the uncertainty of all things here below, we confound two things directly opposed to each other; namely, providing for to-morrow, which is duty essentially necessary, since without it the whole affairs of the world would soon be in a state of stagnation; and presuming on to-morrow, which is equally foolish, sinful, and dangerous, and against which we are specially cautioned in the words preceding the text, where the wise man says, "Boast not of to-morrow," and then gives the reason, "thou knowest not what a day shall bring forth." This, then, is the subject on which we are to address you on this first sabbath of the year. And, O! may the Spirit of God so overrule it for our good, that we may be effectually deterred from neglecting our present advantages in the vain hope of another day furnishing an opportunity of retrieving our loss. In the sequel I shall endeavour, in dependence on Divine aid,

I. To illustrate the sentiment contained in the text, man's total ignorance of the future.

II. Point out a few of the important lessons a due consideration of the doctrine should teach us.

I. I shall endeavour to illustrate the sentiment contained in the text, man's total ignorance of the future.—"We know not what a day shall bring forth." No man will attempt to contravert this assertion. No individual will risk his character by asserting that he can tell what shall be the changes of the coming day; the subject, therefore, requires not proof, but illustration; and for that purpose we claim your attention to the following particulars:

1. We are ignorant of the future as to our circumstances. What your state now is in this respect, you all know. The blessing of God has been upon you, your wealth has increased, your comforts have been multiplied; or, at least, though you may not have the luxuries, you enjoy the necessaries and conveniences of life; around you are many friends, rejoicing in your welfare, and sweetening, by their company, their fellowship and their good offices, the cup of blessings you possess. But are you sure that your circumstances shall continue so? Are you sure no sharp blast shall sweep over you, and by its desolating effects destroy, or, by its noxious influence, embitter all—ere the year you have begun with such joy has revolved. Nay, perhaps before many of its months have passed, there may be a change, a lamentable change! For any thing you at this moment can tell, these bright prospects which God has now given you, and which, at this season, furnish you and yours with a thousand enjoyments, may die away. It may please God that riches make to themselves wings and vanish, or your means of subsistence may be taken from you, and you who now frequently, or occasionally, as God enables you, minister to the wants of others; who do it with joy, and are thankful that you are able to do so, may need the aid you now give, may become dependent on others, and then have the pain to find some who now move in a sphere far inferior to your own, and thankfully receive your offered kindness in the day of your adversity, forgetting their obligation, and knowing you no longer. You may be left poor, and, as to this world, wretched; and those very men who now profess so great friendship to you, like insects who love only the flower in its bloom, may become cold and indifferent to you, may pass you by unnoticed; may perhaps be secretly seeking your hurt—nay, perhaps may have become your bitter foes, not for any sin or fault of yours, but from the mean motives of paltry self-interest, or from still worse motives, arising from the malevolence of their hearts. But we cannot go on with this—the thought is sickening; the scene, drawn at full length, would be agonizing. No, my brethren, I will not suppose all the distressing changes that may take place in your circumstances ere the year be closed; but enough has been said to show, that in this respect we cannot tell what a day may bring forth.

2. We cannot tell what a day may bring forth, as to the state of our bodies and our minds. At the moment we are addressing you, your bodies are in some comfortable measure of health, your limbs are active, your senses perform their functions; and, as your bodies are healthy, so likewise are your minds, you can now reason, determine, reflect, hope; but the future—ah! who can tell what a change, what a melancholy change, may soon be in these respects. It may be, ere many days elapse, these

bodies may be stretched in agonizing pain upon a sick bed, or enervated and emaciated, painfully affected by every change in the atmosphere of your apartment, lie reclined on a couch, unable to move, except as friends and attendants' aid; these now active limbs of yours, paralyzed and withered, ere many days may hang apparently useless appendages from your bodies, incapable of discharging one of those functions for which they were intended, or, severed from them as rotten branches from the tree, may have been consigned to corruption, sad mementos of the coming dissolution of that body of which they formed a part; ere many days, those eyes, which now usefully make known to you the figure and colours of external objects, may be covered over with the film of obscurity, may be closed in darkness, no longer enabling you to see the much-loved features of kindred and friends, dooming you to travel your remaining days through this world's fair scenes in deepest gloom; ere many days elapse, these ears, which now appreciate the melody of sounds, and which enable you to hear the word of God, the message of mercy to guilty man, and to rejoice at the voice dear to your souls, may be closed in dulness, and be to you as though you had never enjoyed their aid, except by the remembrance of pleasures for ever gone; and these minds, with all their noble powers and faculties, may, ere many days, become a wreck—a wreck how deeply humiliating! judgment and reason fled, and only the outward to distinguish you from the beasts that perish! But I cannot proceed in the enumeration of the changes that may be. The picture is too full of horror; even as ideas crowd on my own mind they become intensely harassing. But surely enough has been here said to impress on our minds the solemn truth—"We know not what a day may bring forth."

3. We are ignorant of the future as to our families and connexions. Alas! what changes are continually taking place in this respect. As I now picture to myself the circumstances, how firm appears the chain of your domestic affections. It has many, very many links, and they appear too firmly riveted to be easily disunited. I think I behold you as you appeared coming to the house of God this day. There was the husband and the wife; how tender the tie that binds them to one another! She with fond affection was leaning on his arm, and her very looks seemed to tell how much her happiness depended on his love; there, too, were some of their little ones, hand in hand, walking by their side, and, while filial love warms the bosoms of the children to their parents, there seemed to be a sweet smile of gladness on the countenance of the parents, as they cast their eyes now on one another, and now on their offspring—happy little group! Again, I looked in thought, and there came the brother and sister; they love each other; a sense of her sex's weakness gives to her a feeling of reliance on his strength, and he feels happy in giving his aid; they are blessed, they left a happy home for the sanctuary of their choice, and when its services are over they will return again to a happy home; and there, too, were the bosom friends, in groups, according to age and inclination, taking sweet counsel to go to the house of God in company; love beams on their countenances, and they part for their respective seats, in the pleasing hope of again meeting for fellowship as sweet while they return.

And shall such happiness continue, shall no change pass over it? Ah how vain would it be to indulge in such a hope amid the thousand daily recurring events, that tell us how change sweepeth over all. We attempt to look into the future. There is a dimness resting on every object, yet something may be descried; there are coffins, there they are, of various sizes, and on them is inscribed the ominous figures, 1835, but the letters of the names are hid in gloom; there are graves there, they are of various dimensions, they are opened at various times, but there is a mist on the scene, and we cannot tell of whose sepulchres they form a portion. Thus far it is allowed to draw conclusions respecting what is to come from what is past, but no further; and still we cannot tell what a day shall bring forth. Reverting to the scene of happiness we pictured, let us take our illustration theme. That pair, so affectionate, so fondly united, may, when a few more days are past, experience the pangs of separation; instead of the living loving partner, there will be but the new closed grave. He, the sad survivor, as he watches and weeps, will call on his loved one, but in the deep sleep of the grave, insensible to the voice of affection, she lies silent and cold. These children we saw around, these hopeful youths, growing up, intelligent, active, obedient—the comfort of their parents, the joy of their friends, what shall we say of them? That

beloved son, the father's hope for declining years; that fair daughter, the mother's pride; that darling little one on whose sweet countenance they so often gaze with all the delight of parental love, then, one or all of them, when a few more days are gone, may be clad in the winding sheet, placed in the coffin, and lowered into the grave; they sleep there, in the loveliness of their beauty they died, and many and sad are the sorrowing hearts that mourn their loss. Youthful companions, ere a few days more are past, that sweet chain of friendship may be broken. Death, like the lightning's flash, may strike some of its links, and they will dissolve; and you, the lonely survivors, will stand and weep sadly over the early grave of the friend who was so dear; so fading and so uncertain are the fond hopes of friendship or of love! One day we see a rose bloom in beauty on its stem of green, shedding around its perfume, and seeming the pride of the garden—the next, we look, but the rose is no more; its brilliant hues have disappeared; fled are its life and its bloom; its leaves lie scattered and mingling with the dust of the earth which nourished it; just so are the fond hopes we cherish, they pass away with their kindred pleasures, and leave us to the saddening sense of our loneliness. So true is the declaration of Solomon, "We know not what a day shall bring forth."

4. We are totally ignorant of futurity, as to the continuance of our lives. Life has its charms, even when attended with many of the ills which pain, poverty, and disappointment connect with it; we still fondly cling to it, and it requires a mind deeply imbued with the hope of immortality to make the wish for departure lasting and sincere. Life has its connexions. There are many living with us in whom we are deeply interested, whose dependence is upon us for protection and guidance, and it is not without many a pang, of the deepest bitterness, that we can bring our minds to be resigned to depart and leave them behind, to all the evils our imaginations may suppose, as likely to befall them in their unprotected state. We know that the present life is given us but for a period; we know that we must lay it down, we know that it may be short, yet we fondly cling to the hope of its continuance, and look forward to many years to come.—How deceptions such hopes are, daily occurrences are continually reminding us. Now, indeed, it appears probable that many summers shall pass, and many winters come and go, ere we be called to sleep the long sleep of the grave. But may it not be otherwise? Now, indeed, we are in health, our nerves are braced in vigour, our pulses beat in calm steadiness and regularity, and all seems to promise that we shall live here for many, very many days; but ere a few days more are gone the change of death may have past upon us, ere a few more months are gone our graves may be growing green; and while the wild flowers spread over them, their beauteous forms, all that remain of us below, be corruption and rottenness. Ay, there may be, there are, I may say in safety, there are individuals sitting here to-day, to whom their friends have already paid the compliments of the season, who are surrounded with all the comforts of life; who, ere the first quarter of the year is gone, may be pining away with sickness, which shall take the colour from their cheeks and the vigour from their bodies, shall lay them low, first on a sick-bed and then on a death-bed, and then in their graves; and their widows and their children, even their little ones, shall come to worship in this church, still clad in the habiliments of mourning, on the first Sabbath of 1836, and have to say, as perhaps the voice of another addresses them, Ah! well do we remember what the preacher said this day last year; for it will then, indeed, come with power to their remembrance. But while this will, in all probability, be the case with some of us, O mark our uncertainty of the future—we know not whose lot it will be. Young woman, with healthy cheek and smiling eye, thou mayest be the first victim of the year! Young man, with all thy boasted strength and vigour, it may be thee; or it may be thee who hast so lately sought for thyself a companion and a helpmate, and taken her home to thy dwelling to cheer thee; or it may be thee with the grey locks and furrowed countenance, who earnest hither bending o'er thy staff. Such is our ignorance of the future with respect to the continuance of life; for, what is our life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little, and then vanisheth away. Let us think of the many thousands of our race who, though but lately they seemed as likely to live as ourselves, are gone into eternity—many of them gone too before they had prepared to give in their account to God; and we shall both see the truth of the statement contained in the text, and be excited to cry, with the Psalmist, "Lord,

so teach us to number our days, that we may instantly apply our hearts unto wisdom." I proceed, therefore, as was proposed,

II. To point out some of the lessons of practical instruction, which a consideration of the doctrine contained in the text should teach us. Man moralizes over the flower that blooms and dies; man moralizes over the meteor that casts its beauteous tints along the sky and disappears; man moralizes over the stream as it glides onward till lost in the ocean; but here is a more important subject. Let us seek lessons of heavenly wisdom from our ignorance of the future.

1. Learn the importance of a life of faith and dependence on God. In the volume of eternal truth it is written, the "just shall live by faith." They must, therefore, in the very nature of things, walk by faith and not by sight; and our uncertainty of what shall befall us in the after part of our lives is admirably calculated to impress on our minds the propriety of living a life of faith and dependence on the promises of God. It is this, and this alone, which will enable us to recognise the divine presence at all times, and to rest contented in the conviction, that infinite wisdom and unbounded goodness are operating in all the events which can befall us, though these events may be as much beyond our control as they are hid from our view. Like the ancient Israelites, we are engaged in a wilderness pilgrimage. Like them, the time of our movement and the time of our rest is fixed by God; like them, the time of our conflicts and the time of our victories are appointed by him; but these times and occurrences, as future, are hid from our view. What need, then, is there for a believing view of his mercy and goodness, such a view as will lead us to a believing dependence on him? Man was never designed to be independent, and the consideration of our ignorance and dependence should impress on our minds a conviction of the wisdom of casting all our care upon him for time and eternity, for body and soul; for though we do not know what shall befall us to-morrow, he does; though we know here but to prepare for coming storms, he can prepare us for them; though we are little able to contend with our spiritual adversaries, who may be even now meditating a violent attack upon us, and that at the very point where they know us to be most vulnerable, yet, cultivating a spirit of holy dependence on God, we shall gain the victory we shall be safe. Yes, Christians, you shall be safe. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, whose help the Lord is; a thousand may fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand; but the plague shall not come nigh to him; nor shall he be afraid of evil tidings whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

2. Learn to cultivate a spirit of holy resignation to the divine will. This world is not the land of certainty, but the land of uncertainty. True it is, indeed, a land of certainty exists, but it is on the other side of the river of death. Here every thing is changeable, every thing is fluctuating. Your possessions, though designated with your own names, you cannot call in perpetuity your own; either you may soon be taken away from them, or they be wrested from you. Yes, 'tis a world of uncertainty, a title this inscribed not only on the cottages of the poor, but on the palaces of princes and the mansions of the rich—an inscription which is written not merely on the pale, faded cheek of the diseased, but on the countenance flushed with health and youthful beauty.

In this changeable scene, this land full of uncertainty, it has pleased your God you should dwell for a season, and of this uncertainty experience your full share; but still with all this there is a possibility of enjoying comparative happiness—remembering God's gracious character, remembering God's infinite love as displayed in the gift of his own Son to be your Saviour, and remembering the infinitude of his wisdom, resign yourselves to his holy and blessed will. Remembering what God is, and what he hath promised amidst all the uncertainty of the future, we may calmly say with David, "Here I am; let him do with me as seemeth good in his sight." It may be many afflictions are in store for us. Many of the days of the year we have now begun may be days of pain and grief, and its nights nights of sleeplessness and sorrow; but let us resign ourselves to Him who can and will make our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. A thousand unseen ills may be before us, but it is not for us to be over anxious about to-morrow, seeing that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Let us leave all that concerns us in his hands for our journey

through the great wilderness; for we may safely leave the direction of all to our heavenly guide, and trust to him to lead us in the right way. Oh! difficult lesson to learn, hard lesson to practise; help us, Father in heaven, to say, and to say it from the heart under all that comes upon us, "Thy will be done."

3. Learn to cultivate a spirit of cautious moderation as to the things of the present life. You know the fleeting nature of these things; you have seen that they are uncertain. Men in general, and especially men who have no influential feeling of religion, are easily elated with prosperity. Let them but receive an accession to their fortune, or an addition to their property, and oh! how mighty men they imagine themselves; their pride, formerly bad enough, becomes now equally disgusting and intolerable; it lurks in every furrow of their haughty countenances, and displays itself in every look of their proud eyes; they walk mincingly along as if their few paltry pounds had raised them above the reach of wo and the level of their fellow-men; and when a change comes, how equally depressed are they; they are swallowed up of grief. No wonder it is so, poor contemptible earthworms! their gods are taken away; and what have they more? They can no longer expect the servile adulation of the mean despicable creatures that once ran with obsequious readiness at their bidding, and who, while they in reality despised them in their hearts for their mean upstart pride, seemed to worship them as very deities on earth.

But the man who is properly impressed with a sense of the uncertainty which hangs over the future, whose mind is possessed with the general idea, that in the world he must expect to meet with trouble, but at the same time is sensible of his entire ignorance of what shall be the particular instances, as well as the precise periods, at which they shall befall him, has within him a feeling which will serve to allay the risings of pride, and chasten exuberant joy in the season of prosperity, as also to moderate the workings of despondency and the oppression of sorrow in the day of dark adversity. He knows here he cannot safely trust to a continuance of any thing that is earthly. He knows that there is nothing sure below the skies, and, therefore, he is not overwhelmed with any amazement. Let a consideration, then, of our total ignorance of what a day may bring forth deeply impress on our minds the importance of the advice given by the apostle Paul: "The time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." Think, then, on the uncertainty that attaches to all things here; think of your ignorance of what shall be on the morrow, and it will, by the blessing of God, prove a mean of preserving you from being over-elated by prosperity, or over much depressed by adversity.

4. Learn to cultivate a spirit of humility. Pride was not made for man; nothing sits worse on him. He has nothing to make him haughty, but every thing to make him humble. Yet self-conceit, high ideas of themselves, low opinions of all others, how common among men. One would think the very reading of the text would lay them low. I know not what may befall me to-morrow. There may come upon me some temptation quite suited to my natural temper, before which I may fall; some evil may come upon me by which I may be overwhelmed. Yes, it is true man may possess knowledge by which he can calculate the courses of the stars. He may tell, and tell with the greatest possible nicety, the very moment at which an eclipse of the sun or the moon shall take place, and because of such knowledge he is ready to vaunt; but is there ground for pride? Go but a step farther, and the mind of a Newton is as dark as that of a child. The wisest, the most expert calculator cannot tell when he and all his glory shall be eclipsed; he cannot tell what trials may come upon him to-morrow; he cannot tell what afflictions may, ere the end of the week, dim and overcloud his now fair prospects; he cannot tell to how many, very many dangers he may be exposed in the course of the year. What a humbling lesson does this uncertainty teach to vain man who would be wise, though born like the wild ass's colt! What a humiliating lesson does it teach those haughty ones who imagine they are the men, and wisdom shall die with them! and how forcibly does it impress upon all of us the propriety of cultivating lowliness of spirit, and putting on humbleness of mind!

5. Learn to cultivate a spirit of prayer. Surely this is a lesson which, in a very forcible manner, the subject we have been considering calls us to learn, and it is a duty which it shows to be our interest habitually to perform. When we rise in the morning, our bodies renewed by rest, and our minds invigorated by the relaxation they enjoyed during the season of repose, the prospect before us may be highly flattering. But as a fair morning gives no certainty the day shall be stormless; so our state in the morning affords no certainty that evening, when it comes with its dark shadows over us, shall find us in circumstances as pleasing. This is a truth testified by the experience of ages. In the morning we know not what temptations or difficulties, what losses or disappointments, may attend us through the day. A single day may deprive us of all our comforts and of all our friends. Surely, then, if we are ignorant of what shall befall us, if we know not what God has determined shall take place during the day, it is our wisdom, as well as our duty, to commit ourselves to his care in the exercise of heartfelt prayer. He only can preserve us in safety. Dangers are all around us; difficulties may meet us in every path. We know them not, but God knows them; and then if God who knows them be our friend, all shall be well. If he smile upon us, we are safe. All the fiends in the pit of wo, all the ungodly, all the malicious men upon the earth, though they should all meet and join to vent their malice against the weakest saint of the Lord God of hosts, that weak saint, holding holy communion with God in prayer, and reclining on his omnipotence, may sternly defy them. For this, as well as for other reasons, our blessed Lord, in the days of his earthly sojourning, spake a parable, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Oh! then, let our ignorance of the future lead us to the habitual exercise of this important, this holy duty; and as we know not what a day may bring forth; as we know not the things which shall befall us; as we know not what shall be on the morrow, it is, and must be, good for us to be always bringing our cause before God in the exercise of fervent, effectual prayer, seeking strength to aid us in every time of need. Ignorant of what shall take place, go depend on the promised aid of God, go pray to him, and you shall not be deceived in your hopes; you shall not be disappointed in your expectations. God is a refuge to his people at all times—a very present help in the time of trouble.

To conclude, let a consideration of what has been said stir us all up to give instant and deep attention to things which concern eternity. The importance of these things every one knows and acknowledges; there is no need, therefore, to spend time in endeavouring to prove it. The great matter is to get it impressed on your hearts. All acknowledge, that, in order to future happiness, they must have an interest in the great Redeemer, and be by his grace prepared for admittance into that region of purity where he now is. All acknowledge, that means of grace are furnished them with a view to this preparation, and that it is their duty to be making constant and diligent use of them. But with all this knowledge, and with all these confessions, how many are still delaying to give attention to those things which concern their eternal peace. But should not an uncertainty of the future, should not a consideration of the solemn truth that we cannot tell what a day may bring forth, check this thoughtlessness, and stir us up to holy endeavours after the one thing needful? Delay not then, I beseech, giving instant attention to these things under the foolish, the ruinous idea that you shall have a more convenient season to do so. Look not forward with these hopes to old age. You may never arrive at it; and even should you be allowed to arrive at it, you will find old age to be a very unfit and inconvenient season for such arduous work as salvation work. Remember, "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation;" but this may not be said to you tomorrow. Some of us will, ere the year close, be in our graves, I trust in heaven. How pleasing would it be if, as one after another we entered there, we were privileged to carry to our fathers and our brethren, who are gone before us, the blessed tidings that we left all the members of that church, with which we and they were connected while on earth, going forward zealously and perseveringly in the heavenly road, and preparing for joining us in glory. Fulfil ye, then, our joy, and whatsoever your hands find, to do it with your might; for there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither we go, and "we know not what a day may bring forth." Amen.

THE PRESENT CONDITION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF BELIEVERS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, HUTCHESONTOWN, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH, 29TH JULY, 1832,

By the Rev. WILLIAM WELSH,
Minister of the Relief Congregation, Falkirk.

"*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*"—1 JOHN iii. 2.

THE Gospel produces on the character, happiness, and prospects of those who cordially embrace it, a great and salutary change. Foes become friends; rebels subjects; and slaves of Satan sons of God. This benign influence of the Gospel, when duly received, was strikingly exemplified in the history of those persons to whom John addressed the words of my text. There was a time when they stood in a relation to God far different from that of sons. Long had they lived in a state of hostility to him. Not a few of them had passed through the successive stages of youth and manhood; and some had reached the period of old age ere they were inspired with the hope of seeing Christ *as he is;* and of being made *like him*, in honour and happiness. Far, however, as they had wandered from God; many and aggravated as had been their transgressions against him; now that they had embraced the Gospel as the only way of salvation and rule of life, they could claim God as their Father. The world failed to discover that the change which they had undergone was attended with a happier, as well as a holier frame of mind. But whether perceived by others or not, they now experienced a joy which the world could neither impart nor impair, and far less destroy, even a foretaste of eternal blessedness. Though despised, and of no account in this world's esteem, they could say, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

My christian brethren, what we now are, and what we expect to become, are the topics on which my text leads me to address you. I therefore solicit your attention, in the first place, to *what we now are—sons of God.*

First, How did we become sons of God? Man, as originally created by God, was his son; not so much because he was the workmanship of his hand, as the image of himself. But by disobedience he forfeited for himself and his posterity his resemblance to God; so that by nature we are all outcasts from God's holy and happy family; no longer to be recognised and honoured, protected, and blessed as his children. We became the children of the wicked one, and not more like him in baseness than in wretchedness and misery. In this state of exile and wo we should have remained for ever, but for the eternal and gracious purpose of our God, who "predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace." We were restored to the forfeited honour of the *sons of God*, by "being begotten again by the Father; and born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We became the sons of God, not by natural generation, nor in virtue of any inherent power, or tendency, nor in consequence of any endeavour on the part of others, but by the agency of his Spirit. For the sake of Christ, he shed on us abundantly his Spirit's influence, and, in a moral sense, created us anew; opening our hearts to receive the truth, and softening them to feel its powers, he dispelled darkness from our understandings, disorder from our affections, and rebellions from our wills. He took away our hard and stony hearts, and gave us hearts of flesh. All who belong to the family of God were in this way made his sons. As there is no way of becoming sons of men, but by being born of human parents, so is there no way of being made sons of God, but by being born of him by the Spirit of grace.

Secondly. May we know whether we are sons of God? John speaks not in the language of doubt; with the utmost confidence he says, "Now are we the sons of God." If Job could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;" if David could say, "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory;" if Paul could say, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing;" if John could thus confidently express himself, "We are the sons of God"—we also may know whether we are so related to him. We may know it by the faith we exercise, if it leads us to entire dependence on Christ, and to the utmost diligence in duty. We may know it by the repentance we have experienced, if it has been heartfelt and sincere, arising from a true sense of sin, and resulting in its entire renunciations. We may know it by the feelings we cherish toward our brethren in Christ, if, without respect to denomination or party, we love them sincerely, for the sake of Him whose children they are, and whose image they bear. We may know it by the state of our affections toward God, if they are set on "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Thirdly. What is it to be sons of God? Every one whose mind is duly affected with a sense of his own insignificance and worthlessness, and of the independence, majesty, and blessedness of God, will be astonished at the condescension and grace displayed in sinners of mankind being made sons of God. How noble is this title which belongs to us as Christians! Compared with the glory of our descent, not once to be named is the honour of being born of the most illustrious monarch that ever swayed a sceptre. Yes, my brethren, to be the sons of God far transcends the distinction of being the progeny of the most exalted and renowned of kings. The sons of monarchs are, indeed, all princes; one only, however, inherits the throne; but the sons of God are all kings, destined to sit upon thrones, and to wear crowns, the glory of which shall never be tarnished. The honours of sovereigns and princes shall pass away, and when men shall appear in the presence of "Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor," kings shall stand on the same level with the meanest of mankind. But the honours of the sons of God shall survive all human distinctions; and shall be fully manifested, until every earthly honour shall have sunk into oblivion.

Nor is it a mere name, my brethren, that is bestowed on us in our being called sons of God. Not only are we so distinguished by name, but so made in reality; and actually introduced to all the privileges of God's children. Notwithstanding the display of his majesty and glory, with which we are encompassed, we feel assured he takes notice of us, and regards us with a father's love. Though assailed by evils which we cannot avert or remedy, we enjoy composure of mind, being persuaded that he will either protect us from, or sustain us under them. Once we were slaves of Satan and of corruption, but now are we introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Once we were far from God and strangers to him, but now have we free access at all times into his presence; and "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." Living in the confident expectation of a rich and lasting inheritance, during our ministry, we receive the education and maintenance suited to our heavenly origin. We have the bread and water of life for our support, angels for our attendants, the Spirit for our teacher, and the Son of the Highest for our advocate and friend!

It is not of future, but of present privileges that I now speak. "Now," says the Apostle, "are we the sons of God." We, indeed, may be of no account among men, known to few, and honoured by none; but if we be the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, then we are high in the esteem of angels and of God, and our names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. Our earthly parentage may be obscure and mean; but by a mysterious process, and an act of unparalleled grace, we have been constituted members of a family, each of which is heir to a throne. We may be poor in this world, but we are heirs of an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Our abode in earth may be as void of comfort as of elegance; but "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the

heavens," shall soon be our residence. Seeing we are distinguished by a title thus noble, and exalted to privileges thus great, we may well adopt the exclamation of John: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

In the second place, *what we expect to become*, is the point to which I now direct your attention. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

I remark, first, the confidence with which we may expect future happiness: "*We know we shall be like him.*" We do not, indeed, possess the same kind and degree of evidence which John enjoyed of the reality of heavenly blessedness. He saw the new Jerusalem in all its glory. He beheld the great white throne, and him that sat on it, encompassed by a thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of glorified saints. He witnessed the robes of spotless white in which they are arrayed, and heard the melodious songs in which they celebrate their Redeemer's praise. But though we are not favoured with such evidence as he enjoyed, we have all that is necessary to sustain our hope, in the reality of that blessedness which God has in reserve for his children. The number and minuteness of these predictions, which have received an exact and circumstantial accomplishment in the history of Jesus and of the Church; the remarkable coincidence subsisting between the announcements of prophecy and the present state of the Jews; the sublime nature of the doctrines of the Gospel; the holy tendency of its principles; the pure morality of its precepts; the circumstances in which it was first promulgated, and the success which has attended its ministrations, convince us of the truth of that record, which reveals to us life and immortality. Inspired with the confidence of John and of Paul, we can adopt the language of both, and say, "We know we shall be like him: we shall see him as he is." We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. "The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

I remark, secondly, the peculiar nature of the happiness of heaven, "We shall be like him." The descriptions with which we are favoured of heaven and its happiness, are negative, rather than positive. They tell us of the evils not to be suffered, rather than of the blessings to be enjoyed. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; nor shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; there shall be no night there; and there shall be no more curse; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever." But the description given in my text is more specific and satisfactory: "We shall be like him." It must satisfy the most enlarged desires of the immortal soul to be assimilated to him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Our bodies, like his, shall be gloriously fashioned; for, renovated and rendered immortal, they shall be qualified for the exalted and increasing employments of the celestial state. Our minds, like his, shall be gloriously constituted, for, vigorous and pure, they shall be fitted for the noble pursuits and sublime contemplations of the heavens. Our character, like his, shall be glorious, for, freed from all taint of impurity, we shall be arrayed in the robe of his righteousness. Our stations, like his, shall be glorious, for we shall be near to that throne on which he sits at the right hand of his Father. Our happiness, like his, shall be glorious, for we shall possess all we can desire or be able to enjoy. Who is not ready to say with the Psalmist, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness?"

I remark, thirdly, the means by which this assimilation to Christ shall be produced, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." To see Christ as he is, shall constitute an essential and important part of the felicity of heaven. "The pure in heart shall see God." But the apostle regards seeing Christ as he is as the grand producing cause of that assimilation to him, in which shall consist the chief peculiarity of future bliss. In our present state, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. If, therefore, a view of God, as he is revealed

in his word, transforms us into his image, how much more efficacious in assimilating us to Christ must it be, to behold him as he is actually displayed in the heavens. As the earth owes all that diversity of light and shade with which it is adorned, and all that variety of flower and luxuriance of fruit with which it is beautified and enriched to the agency of the sun; so shall the redeemed in heaven derive all their beauty, and all their blessedness, from the presence of him who sits upon the throne. As the face of Moses, when he came from the presence of the Lord, shone with exceeding brightness, so shall the glorified person of the Redeemer transform, into a state of corresponding splendour, those who encircle his throne.

I remark, fourthly, the time when the felicity of the sons of God shall be consummated, "When he shall appear."

Some have maintained that the souls of men shall exist in a state of unconsciousness from death till the resurrection. But if the souls of believers do not, at their death, immediately pass into glory, would He who is the God, not of the dead but of the living, have said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" Would Lazarus have been represented as seen in Abraham's bosom? Would our Lord have said to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?" Would Stephen have prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit?" Would Paul have said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better?" We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Such sayings of the faithful and true witness, and of inspired men, are incompatible with the notions to which I have alluded. The spirits of the just made perfect, alive, and active in the heavens, are now inheriting the promises. Their bliss, however, though inconceivably great, is not so full and perfect as it is destined to become. Not till the second advent of Christ shall they be fully like him in honour and happiness. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God." At his mandate the living shall be changed and the dead raised. Every eye shall see him, arraigned not at Pilate's bar, but seated upon that tribunal before which Pilate himself must stand, arrayed, not in the robe of mockery, but in garments of real majesty; wearing, not the crown of thorns, but a wreath of unfading glory; holding in his hand, not the reed of derision, but the sceptre that sways the universe. "Before him shall be gathered all nations." And from that throne, on which he sits, shall he thus address his believing people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then shall he introduce them within the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, and present them before the throne of his Father, where are fulness of joys, and pleasures, for evermore. Then shall be the complete manifestations of the sons of God, the time when their bliss shall be consummated.

I remark, lastly, the inconceivable greatness of this future happiness, "It doth not yet *appear* what we shall be." We know not what our bodies shall be; for, as far as the brilliant crystal surpasses the earthy matter in which it is imbedded, so far shall our glorified bodies transcend those we now possess. We know not what our minds shall be, for much as we now differ from what we were in infancy, more shall we then surpass what we now are. We know not what our characters shall be; for, more than he who is converted to God, differs from this sinner, shall this saint in heaven excel the saint on earth. We know not what our happiness shall be; for, "eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Great as is the happiness experienced by us on earth, in holding fellowship with God, and in the exercise of holy affections; sublime and splendid as are the descriptions given in the Bible, of this felicity of heaven, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." The bliss to be enjoyed by the sons of God, through eternity, is so vast, and differs so much from any happiness experienced on earth, that inspiration itself cannot make appear "what we shall be." Although, like Paul, we were caught up into the third heaven, the splendours of the throne, the glory of him that sits on it, and the brilliant array of them that throng around it, would so overpower our senses as to unfit us for perceiving what we shall be. But we need not regret that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; for there is reason to think that the full blaze of that glory, which shall yet burst upon our enraptured view, would be too much for our feeble faculties to sus-

tain, and would unfit us for the necessary employments of the world. It is his mercy, therefore, and his love, that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

My Christian brethren, now that ye are the sons of God, I would exhort you to act in accordance with your noble origin and exalted prospects. A son honoureth his father, cultivate ye reverence for the sacred majesty of God. A son receives his father's instructions, submit ye with child-like docility to the authority of God's word. A son obeys his father's will, be ye subject to the law of your Creator. A son relies on his father's protection, depend ye on the care and kindness of God. A son submits to his father's correction, be ye resigned to the dispensations of providence. A son is interested in the honour of his father's house, maintain ye the dignity of your heavenly Father's family, by means of the sanctity of your own character.

And, my brethren, as you expect to be like Christ hereafter, I would exhort you to cultivate a resemblance to him here. Like him, do ye respect the authority of heaven; he always did what pleased his Father. Like him, cultivate ye habits of devotion; he spent whole nights in prayer. Like him, keep yourselves pure; he did no sin. Like him, cherish humility of mind; though in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to death. Like him, breathe ye a spirit of disinterested benevolence; "though rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich."

But I dare not presume that all present are sons of God. In every such assembly there are children of the wicked one, as well as "the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." If you believe not, without doubt, all that God has revealed, and obey not, without reserve, all that he has enjoined; if you have not sorrowed for sin and renounced it; and if you walk not in love to man, and in fellowship with God, then you are the children of Satan. If you continue thus related to your worst enemy, you know not what shall be your ultimate degradation and misery. Your bodies shall be rendered immortal, and your minds shall be enlarged, but that they may be susceptible of the greater suffering, and capable of sustaining endless wo. But this melancholy issue of your sins may be averted. The day of grace still lasts. The door of mercy is yet open. The proffer of pardon is again made. God waits to be gracious. But the seasons of probation are passing away. Another year, and your doom may be sealed. To-morrow you may stand before the tribuna of your Judge. To-night, your trial may be required of you. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. To-day, while you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Hear, and your souls shall live. Amen.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR, Greenock.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN MURDOCH, Airdrie.

THE EVILS OF INTEMPERANCE;

A SERMON PREACHED TO THE GREENOCK YOUTHS' TEMPERANCE SOCIETY,

By the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR

Minister of Greenock.

"*Deliver us from evil.*"—MATTHEW vi. 13.

EXPOSITORS attach various meanings to this petition in our Lord's prayer. Chrysostom understands it of the devil, the ὁ πονηρὸς, the evil one, who tempts us to do evil, and who seduces us from the path of duty. The words of our text, when thus explained, may be considered as exegetical of the first part of this petition, "Lead us not into temptation." But we are disposed to adopt the meaning which is most generally attached to it, and to understand it as praying for deliverance from every kind of sin, and from every species of evil. Thus explained, you will at once see the application which we make of it to the prevalent sin of intemperance; and you will understand our views upon this subject, when we cordially pray with regard to it, "Deliver us from evil." Many of you will cordially say, "Amen" to our prayer, while others will challenge its application to the usages of our country. We would urge those who are friendly to our cause to be mild, and gentle, and temperate, n advocating its interests; and we would beg of those who have hitherto disapproved of our plans, to give the subject a patient and a candid hearing. We ask this in justice to ourselves, to the cause which we have espoused, and to your own characters as intelligent and accountable beings. We ask it also for the sake of a young and rising generation, to whom the eyes of the Church are directed with the deepest interest, as the defenders of her bulwarks, the ornament of society, and the hope of a succeeding age. And we ask it in the name of that Saviour whose commission we bear. We speak as unto wise men: judge ye what we say.

In addressing you on this subject, a subject which justly occupies the attention of the most enlightened philanthropy, we are aware of the difficulty of doing justice to the cause. But as we consider neutrality, in all matters of christian morals, to be no less criminal than opposition, we willingly sacrifice every personal consideration to a sense of imperative duty.

The cause in which we are embarked is not one of individual interest. It is no personal quarrel, in which private friendship enlists its advocates and collects its strength to overcome some secret or avowed opposition. It is no dogma of sectarian controversy, in which the blind zeal of the parties is a miserable atonement for their want of judgment and of christian charity. Nor is it a question of civil polity, framed in opposition to the "powers that be," and whose decision will go far to affect the political interests of our country. No; it is a question of even deeper interest than this, much as the principles of constitutional reform have agitated our countrymen. It is a measure which is based upon the eternal prin-

ciples of truth, and which involves the interests of nature and of man—the privileges of our country, and the happiness of our race! It is a cause whose primary object it is to emancipate the inhabitants of the British isles in general, and of this neighbourhood in particular, from a far more dreadful slavery than that of Egyptian bondage, and from a far more terrible famine than that of bread and of water. It is a measure whose object it is remove the scales of intellectual and moral darkness from the mind; to burst those chains which immorality has forged, and which an inconsiderate and criminal compliance with the habits of society has fettered down to the claims of imperative custom; to elevate man above the brutes that perish; and to render his present character and conduct worthy of his glorious destinies in a better world.

But though these are our professed and our real designs, yet there are many great, and good, and honourable men who deny us their co-operation, and refuse to assist us. They say, that they wish us success in our efforts to stem the torrent, and to arrest the tide of wretchedness, of profligacy, and of crime, which pours through the floodgates of intemperance, and yet they decline to give us their personal support! They say, that they wish us success in our arduous and difficult enterprise, in rousing the infatuated drunkard from his moral slumber, on the very verge of destruction, and yet their cry is not mingled with ours, in warning him of his terrible danger! They say, that they wish us success in a cause whose operations will preserve the lovely, the tender, and the young, from that moral contamination which dies not with the body, which enters the very soul, which chills the warm blood of ingenuous youth, withers the bloom of manhood's prime, and blasts the last hope of sinking years, and yet they shrink from the banners we unfurl! They say, that they wish us success in our efforts to arrest the drunkard in his wild and wicked career; to convert the tattered misery of his family into neatness and comfort; and to change the abode of irregularity and crime into order and decency; and yet they leave us to struggle alone! They say, that they wish us success in our endeavours to counteract the desolating ravages of intemperance, and yet they refuse us the weight and the influence of their name! They say, that they wish all men to be sober, and temperate, and moral, and yet they cannot see it their duty to embark with us in the noble cause!

To some, it may appear a very hazardous experiment to attempt to reconcile these expressions of sympathy and of good will with so much cold neutrality. Nor shall we at present undertake the solution of such a moral problem. And, although the apostolic test of charity, which condemns the man who says to a needy brother, "Be ye clothed, and be ye warmed," and yet ministers not to his necessities, starts up fresh into our remembrance, yet we would not, we cannot, we dare not impugn the motives of these men, however boldly we may question the conclusions to which they have come. But, while we refrain from sitting in judgment on the motives of those who differ so widely from us, concerning the best means for breaking down the strongholds of intemperance, and for repelling its desolating career among all that is delicate and lovely in our land, we cannot permit the finger of suspicion to be pointed at ourselves. We claim the very same privilege that we freely grant to those who refuse us their co-operation; we challenge the same freedom of thought; and we exercise the same unfettered liberty of action. Nor do we stop here. As the principles which we avow directly check the present habits and customs of society; as they not only dash from the lips of the drunkard that cup which but increases his madness and confirms his despair, but stamp with disapprobation the indulgences of the virtuous and the sober; as they not only sweep the orgies of debauchery from the haunts of dissipation and the abodes of crime, but also banish every thing like our accustomed artificial conviviality from the dwellings of the righteous, we state them plainly, and we court examination. The objects which we have in view, the system of means which we bring into operation for the accomplishment of these objects, and the principles on which we claim not only the tolerance, but also the positive and the active co-operation of every rational and of every christian man, are unfolded with a plainness that defies misapprehension, although they may not command the approbation of all. If we are in error on any one of these points, and nothing else can warrant a rational being, far less a Christian, in withholding his support, the error should be detected, and the public should be made aware of our smooth complexioned deceit. But if we are not in error; if the object which we have in view is good, and if the means which we employ are lawful, and efficient, and practicable, then we have a right to demand, in the Saviour's

name, not only the tolerance, but also the support and the cordial exertions of every soldier of the cross. If we are not in error, then we have a right to enrol among our friends every follower of the divine Saviour, to challenge as our own every watchman on Zion's bulwarks, and to claim the personal exertions of every captain of the hosts of the God of Israel.

What, then, is the object which we have in view?

To reclaim the drunkard.

This is one of our direct objects. And is there a single individual here, who reads and who believes his Bible to be the Word of God, who would withstand us in our labour of love? Can any one of you read the Apostle's command to the Christians that were at Rome, "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and in drunkenness," (Rom xiii. 13,) and yet say that our object is bad? Can you read the solemn warnings of the wise man, "Be not among wine-bibbers, for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty," (Prov. xxiii. 20,) and yet think that we are overstepping our commission? Is there a good man here, who reverences the Saviour's authority, and yet condemns us for adopting his affectionate address to his chosen friends, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness?" Luke xxi. 34. Is there a brother present who reads the Spirit's command to the Corinthian church, "Now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or a drunkard; with such a one no not to eat," (1 Cor. v. 11,) and yet who blames us for restoring such a one to his friends, his family, and the church? Is there a single parent here who would prevent us from telling his prodigal son, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God? 1 Cor. vi. 9. Is there a mother in existence, whose heart is bound up in her lost boy, whose affections yearn over his wayward wanderings, who reads and who believes the declarations of God, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," (Gal. v. 19,) and yet could that mother blame us for reclaiming the son of her love? Can any one of you read the terrible doom of the drunkard, and yet say that our object is bad? On the contrary, is it not worthy of the enlightened age in which we live; is it not worthy of the country that gave us birth; and is it not worthy of our own characters, as men, as Christians, and as ministers of the Gospel of Christ? Concerning this, surely, there can be but one opinion. The Christian and the moralist, the man of the world and the secluded recluse, the metaphysician and the divine—all must join issue here. Even the drunkard himself must admit that our object is unexceptionably good.

But, while the reclaiming of the drunkard is with us a subject of the deepest interest, there is yet another which commands our warmest sympathies, to which our attention is principally directed, and concerning which our hopes are highest—we wish to preserve the young and the rising generation from becoming drunkards. Nor is it possible to condemn our object here. Those arguments which justify our efforts to save a brother from a drunkard's grave, and from a drunkard's destiny, will warrant us in raising the blazing beacon over those dangerous rocks where the inexperienced and the young make a total wreck of every thing that is valuable in character, that gives a grace to life, and that imparts a relish to human existence. Nor have we in this department to struggle against the force of inveterate habit. But as it is much easier to train the gentle osier to our will, than to straighten the knotty oak, whose bend grew in the twig, so it is a much more hopeful enterprise to preserve the young from the contaminating influence of intemperance, than to break down the confirmed habits of him who is practised in crime, and hardened in the heroism of the intoxicating bowl; for "sooner shall the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots, than those who are accustomed to do evil shall learn to do well." While the same inspired volume declares for our encouragement, that "if we train up a child in the way in which he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it." Can any one of you then say, dare any one of you affirm, that our object is bad, when, in the combined character of a father, a friend, and a spiritual guide, we would warn the young of the nature and of the necessary consequences of intemperance, and extend the hand of pity to save a brother from a drunkard's doom? Concerning the object, therefore, which we have in view, there is not, there cannot be any diversity of opinion. And for this part of our subject we are fully warranted in claim-

ing the cordial support of every man who considers the Word of God to be the rule of our duty, the only infallible standard of faith and of practice.

How, then, are we to accomplish these objects that are so highly desirable? By what means shall we reclaim the drunkard, and preserve the sober from the desolating ravages of intemperance? Is the plan that we propose as unexceptionable as the object which we have in view? Is it efficient, is it lawful, and is it practicable? Of all this there is not a shadow of doubt in our own minds; for the simple remedy that we propose is,

Absolute abstinence from all intoxicating liquors.

It is quite unnecessary for us to enter into any definition of intoxicating liquors. We are by no means called upon to state the component parts of each, from the simple wines of Judea, to the more adulterated vintages of modern Europe; from the noxious preparations of our sister kingdom, vulgarly but emphatically denominated "blue ruin," to the still more pungent cups of our higher latitudes, in order to fix their respective characters. The skill of the chemist is not necessary here; for, without knowing any thing about the different proportions of alcohol, which different liquors contain, every man of common sense can promptly distinguish betwixt what intoxicates and what does not. Every man, possessing the most ordinary claims to the exercise of reason, can easily understand this radical distinction. Whatever destroys the nicely balanced faculties of the mind; by whatever name it may be called; whatever tends to confound all moral distinctions; whatever precipitates the judgment; whatever gives the character of rashness to the conduct; whatever bewilders the mind, dims the eye, and falters the tongue; whatever gives artificial excitement to the animal economy, stimulating the system, and inflaming the blood; whatever has the slightest tendency to this, must be denominated intoxicating, and ranked in that class of liquors which we proscribe.

Nor do we expose ourselves to the charge of ingratitude to God for the bounties of his providence, by banishing from our table these intoxicating liquors. No man, when seated at table, ever thinks of partaking indiscriminately of all that affluence has commanded, and that luxury has with lavish hand supplied. But the circumstance of his making a selection in what he eats and drinks, can never be construed into any thing like a feeling of ingratitude for those delicacies which his taste may refuse; and if mere animal taste may with the utmost propriety make a selection of the bounties of providence, when seated around the festive board, on what principles of reason and of common sense, not to say politeness, shall we deny the same freedom of choice to the Christian who refrains from different, but not less noble motives? Is it polite, or manly, or rational, to bring the ungenerous charge of ingratitude to God against one man, for rejecting some things on the principles of the purest christian benevolence to his fellow-men; and, at the same time, to stamp with approbation the conduct of another man who, it may be, rejects the very same things, on the principles of respect to his personal health, the customs of polished life, or the dictates of correct taste? Let no such inconsistency, as unjust as it is ungenerous, find a place in our bosom. But while we show our respect for the ordinary claims of society, let us manifest a still deeper reverence for the principles of enlightened christian benevolence.

Concerning all that we have said, we consider it quite impossible for any one to advance the very shadow of an objection. Nor can it be urged, that the plan which we propose would prove ineffieient. It is only necessary for us to say, that our plan is, absolute abstinence from all intoxicating liquors, in order to silence every objector on this ground. It is physically impossible that the drunkard should continue such, or that the sober should ever be led astray, if this rule is observed. This truth is so palpable, self-evident, and irresistible, that it would be an insult to your understandings to support it by an argument, or to recount its evidence in detail.

But it is quite possible for our object to be good, and for our plan to be efficient, and yet to be unlawful. As the end will never sanctify the means, our remedy must be lawful, as well as effieient; for in no single instance are we warranted in accomplishing even the greatest good, by means that are, in the slightest degree, morally wrong It is right for us to secure a competent portion of the good things of this life, by diligence and industry; for this is obtaining a good end by unexceptionable means. But we dare not attempt the very same object by dishonesty, robbery, or murder. In like manner we are not at liberty to reclaim the drunkard, or to preserve the young, from a career that is as destructive to the soul as to the body, but by means that are perfectly

lawful. And upon no other principle can we claim the support of our fellow-christians in particular, and of our species universally. But even here we seek for no concealment, we fear no investigation, we dread no assault. We feel a perfect consciousness of satisfaction in the lawfulness of our plan. It is far removed, even above the possibility of suspicion.

For the truth of this we directly appeal to the Scriptures, the only infallible standard of faith and of practice. But throughout the Sacred Volume there is not a single precept that condemns, directly or by implication, the most perfect abstinence from all intoxicating liquors. On the contrary, the use of strong drink is every where condemned, under penalties of the most awful character. To this prohibition there are only two exceptions. The first occurs in Deut. xiv. 26, where the ceremonial law permitted the pious Hebrews to use strong drink once every year, on a day of public thanksgiving. But the circumstances of this permission, connected as it was with religious duties, require only to be stated, to show its perfect consistency with the spirit of our measures. The second exception to this scriptural condemnation of the use of intoxicating liquors occurs in Prov. xxxi. 6, where the wise man says, "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of a heavy heart." But this command is as consistent with the spirit of our principles, as it is in unison with the dictates of reason and the claims of common sense. Indeed, in a medical point of view, we consider stimulating liquors, when properly administered, to be not only useful, but highly necessary—when the physical energies are sinking perhaps under a surgical operation, or when the system is exposed to the combined influence of cold and of wetness of any kind. In such circumstances as these, we would exactly follow the wise man's directions, and "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of a heavy heart." But so far is this from giving any countenance to the use of strong drink, that it is a direct and a positive law to the contrary. The very fact of this single exception being pointed out by the Spirit of God, is a decided evidence that its ordinary use was condemned.

And although the simple wines of Judea, which might resemble the least intoxicating of the continental vintages, were permitted to be moderately used by the Israelites, on account of their local circumstances, yet absolute abstinence from even these involved neither in moral guilt, nor in opposition to the divine law. And the reason is perfectly obvious: there was no legislative enactment upon the subject. They were left perfectly at their liberty to drink temperately, or to refrain. The moderate use of such liquors, therefore, was perfectly lawful, and absolute abstinence from them was equally so.

But, in some cases, absolute abstinence from even these simple wines was commanded by God, which scouts for ever the idea of this being unlawful or morally wrong. The priests of the Lord were required "to drink neither wine nor strong drink," when they were to perform any of the services of the tabernacle. And this was to be "a statute for ever throughout their generations." Lev. x. 9. Accordingly, Paul says, that christian ministers and deacons must not be "given to wine." 1 Tim. iii. 3, 8. And, from his admonition to Timothy, to use a little wine medicinally, we are fully warranted to conclude, that he lived up to the letter, as well as the spirit of this law. Nazarites, too, were at all times commanded to abstain from the use of wine. Num. vi. 3. "Nor is it for kings to drink wine, O Lemuel, or for princes to drink strong drink; lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." Proverbs xxxi. 4.

If the plan of absolute abstinence from the use of all intoxicating liquors, therefore, is unlawful, it is neither the letter nor the spirit of the Bible that makes it so. Nor are we aware of any civil enactment having the slightest claims upon our respect that opposes our operations. Even in the circles of polished life, and in the very highest walks of society, the royal law of liberty (Esther i. 8.) is fully recognised. All are left to their own discretion in the choice of their liquors, and in their use. They may select, they may use indiscriminately, or they may abstain altogether. The laws neither of God nor of man have taken away this natural privilege, nor will the habits of good society impugn its exercise. By what law, then, and upon what principles can our proposition be condemned? If there is any such law, we are totally ignorant of its existence; if there are such principles, they are not in the Word of God; and if there are such maxims in society, we have never recognised their operation. But there is no law, either human or divine; there is no principle in moral science; there is no rule of conduct in social life; there are no interests

worthy of a moment's consideration, that can legitimately arrest our progress, or circumscribe our benevolent design. Our object is unquestionably good; the proposed remedy is perfectly efficient; while its lawfulness is obvious to a moral demonstration.

Concerning the practicability of our plan, there can be no doubt. All that is required here is so perfectly negative, that every age, and sex, and condition, and class, meet upon the very same footing. They are equally called to refrain; and, for this, the peasant is as much fitted as the prince, the servant as his lord, the humble poor as the lettered sage. To comply with our principles, and to carry our plans into operation, will deprive us of no real pleasure. Cicero tells us, that Epicurus himself, who considered animal pleasure to be the only true happiness, was the most temperate man of his age; and that he spent more oil in his lamp than wine in his bottle. Nor will compliance with our rules risk our health. Ancient, as well as modern, physicians declare, that intemperance is the universal parent of disease. It will neither damp our natural courage, nor suppress the native impulses of the generous mind, nor quench the ardour of the patriot's breast. The Spartans were the most generous of men—daring to a fault, and devoted to a proverb; and yet they hated intemperance. They trained their children on the principles of the most rigid abstinence, and exposed their slaves to them when intoxicated, to excite their abhorrence of this brutal vice. To be temperate, imposes no tax, to which the poor man's circumstances are not commensurate. It creates no invidious distinctions in social life or in society. It draws neither upon our time, nor our talents, nor our purse, and it interferes with no one's occupation. All, from the highest to the lowest, from the richest to the poorest, from the most talented to the rudest part of mankind—all meet here on an equal footing—all appear to equal advantage; and all can, with equal dexterity, ease, and convenience, discharge the duties of membership.

What objection, then, can be raised against the principles of temperance societies? The object which we propose, is to reclaim the drunkard, and to preserve the sober. And who that believes his Bible dare say that this is even questionable? The remedy that we propose, is absolute abstinence. And who can lay claim to common sense, and yet dispute its efficiency? The plan that has been suggested, when tested by the divine law, the principles of natural justice, and the approved example of good society, is demonstratively lawful. And to deny its practicability would be to dispute the free agency of man; not to say the history of temperance societies, from the first efforts and the feebler struggles of their infancy, to the gathered energies and the bolder darings of their growing manhood.

What, then, is the character of that man who cares only for himself, and who can refuse to do so much good to his fellow-men, by means that are at once efficient, lawful, and practicable? He is, in every sense of the expression, worse than a useless member of society. The world in which he lives, for whose welfare and happiness he cares nothing, is not benefited by him. He is a mere excrescence in the social body, answering no valuable purpose voluntarily, at least, by his being. The man who seeks not the happiness of others, stands alone, separated from all the myriads of God's creatures.

But we have an imperishable claim upon the countenance and the support of every man who professes to be a Christian. In the Bible, which we all profess to believe and to obey, we learn that love is the sum and the substance of religion; or, in the words of Christ, "the fulfilling of the law." Towards God it must be supreme, and towards all our fellow-men sincere. This is the commencement of religion; and when purified from every degree of selfishness, it is its perfection. It is the law of love that binds all holy creatures to one another, and which will for ever bind the whole to God. But this love, wherever it exists, will lead us irresistibly to do good to all, provided the means are practicable, efficient, and lawful. This principle is inculcated in the letter and in the spirit of the sacred oracles; for the very essence of all practical religion cries out, in the still small voice of the Gospel, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But does that man fulfil this law who refuses to save a brother from a drunkard's grave and from a drunkard's destiny? We need not wait to give a formal answer to our question. The matter is far too palpable to admit of either a shuffling, an evasive, or an artful reply.

And what is the excuse by which such men justify themselves? Why will they not abstain from the use of all intoxicating liquors, when it is perfectly lawful and easy to do so; when the adoption of this measure would be of such incalculable advantage; and when morality and religion, when the Gospel of Jesus begs in pity for the sacrifice? It is just because they think that

'it does them good," and adds "to their comfort." This is the amount of their justification, and on this they plead for a favourable verdict! And can the Christian say so, for whom the Saviour suffered, and bled, and died? Can the Christian say so, and yet remember the Saviour's declaration, "Hereby shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another?" Can the Christian say so, and yet understand the test of character which the Saviour prescribes, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments?" Can the Christian say, without a blush, that he will not sacrifice "all the good and all the comfort" that the use of spirits confers, if it may be the probable means of saving a single immortal soul from present misery and from everlasting ruin? "O tell it not in Gath; publish it not in Askelon, lest the daughter of the uncircumcised should rejoice."

But, leaving for a moment the high vantage ground to which the Gospel exalts our claims; laying aside the Bible, whose principles no good man will resist; and waving all reference to the Saviour's authority, to which every Christian should bow, we have a right, upon the principles of expediency alone, to demand the assistance and the cooperation of every man whose heart is not hardened like the nether-millstone, insensible to the sufferings of humanity, and indifferent to all the charities of life. Cast, for a single moment, all the good, the comfort, and the convivial enjoyment that have ever resulted from the temperate use of intoxicating liquors, into the scales, against which are balanced its wretchedness, its misery, and its utter ruin, and what is the amount of its good but the sighs and the tears of beggared millions?—what is the sum of its comfort but the haggard triumphs of misery over personal happiness and domestic enjoyment?—and what are all its convivial pleasures but the frantic delirium of the hopeless and the perished soul? Granting, for the sake of the argument, that intoxicating liquors are all that their most devoted admirers say of them, is that man's heart in its right place who would not cheerfully sacrifice the whole for the sake of a fellow-creature? Admitting all, and ten thousand times more than has ever yet been written, said, or sung in praise of intoxicating liquors, can this be placed for a moment in competition with the happiness of a father, or a brother, or a "bosom friend, dearer than all?" Is there a parent here, who feels all the rising tenderness and all the elevated emotion of a father's breast, as with exulting complacency he gazes on the daughter of his love, expanding into all the chaste and retiring modesty of womanhood, and could that parent sacrifice all his glorious host of feelings in that daughter's ruin for such a paltry recompense? Is there a mother before me, whose enduring tenderness for the son of her love transcends all the other affections of the heart, whose spirit dwells with proud satisfaction on the growing virtues of his manhood, and whose bosom glows with the bright and the generous promise of his riper years, who could, without the bitterest emotion, see her towering hopes laid prostrate in the finished profligacy of her son? Could that mother consent to this for all the happiness that wine could confer, and for all the pleasure that spirits could bestow? Or could any one deliberately engage in such a brutal barter? And where is the ruthless hand, and the still more ruthless heart, that could balance the sober folly of the temperate drinker with the blasted glory of a brother's crime, with the wild distraction of a ruined sister's shame, with the bitter anguish of a mother's desolate bosom, or with the deeper sorrows of a father's sterner woe? Will not the youth, and the beauty, and the innocence, and the bright loveliness of woman, converted into the repulsive loathsomeness of female degradation, and the unblushing effrontery of a hardened, shameless brow—will not such a painful spectacle as this move the coldest heart to pity, and dash for ever from the lips the cup of temperate indulgence? Look, too, at the rising manhood of youth, and the lofty bearing of his conscious integrity, and the kindling emotions of his generous mind, and the noble career of his advancing probity and honour, and see them changed into blasted reputation, abandoned recklessness of conduct, and contemptible meanness of feeling; and say, if all this can daily pass in review before your eyes, and yet prevent you not from mingling the intoxicating bowl? Can you give the slightest countenance to those practices which have made our children fatherless, our women widows, and our parents childless? Can you welcome that to your table which has taken from so many the necessaries of life; driven them homeless, pennyless, and friendless, from their kindred, and made them vagabonds and fugitives on the face of the earth? Can you indulge in its dangerous comforts, and in all the self-complacency of its oblivious excitement, lay your head on the pillow of unbroken repose, regardless of the countless

thousands whom it has brought to sleepless sorrow; from the shivering wretch whom it starves, to the fallen sister whom it feeds upon wormwood, mingled with gall; from the merciless homicide whom it prisons in the dark and grated dungeon, to the fettered murderer for whom it prepares the ignominious scaffold, an unhonoured grave, and an inglorious name? And is this the dreadful price at which we are to purchase all the alleged advantages of intoxicating liquors; from the inspiration of that royal quaffing which shook high Olympus with its revelry, to the wild ravings of that mad intemperance which confounds all distinctions in its drunken independence; from the fabled glories of the ancient Bacchanal, to the still more fabled "comforts" of the modern temperate drinker? Look also at the tattered and the famished child of the drunkard; visit his comfortless dwelling, scan the appearance of that once lovely and delicate form, whose graceful presence excited the finest feelings of a parent's breast, and threw on all around a spell of more refinement and of deeper interest far; and say still if you will not abandon the practice? Her womanly pride strives in vain to conceal what the utter mockery of her dress betrays; the faded form, the dejected air, the emaciated countenance, and the look of conscious degradation that glistens through the traitor tear, reveal those mouldering trophies by which misery marks its triumphs over youth, and health, and happiness; while she clasps her infant offspring to her breast, to conceal, in its tender embraces, the hectic glow of mingled shame and disease! No complaint is heard, for the author of her sorrow is the husband of her youth; and no reproach escapes her lips, for the source of her suffering is the father of her boy! But the very silence of her sorrow proclaims the lost endearments of her home, and the tongueless wrecks of domestic happiness are eloquent of her wo. And are the pitiful comforts, for which the sober self-complacent man so heartlessly pleads, the slightest compensation for so much personal and domestic desolation? Where is the man that could hesitate betwixt the unequal alternative of indulging in those cold-hearted comforts which perpetuate so much human misery, or of relinquishing such paltry gratifications for such glorious advantages? Can any man, upon the principles of expediency alone, pause here as to the path of duty or of humanity? Can he make it a question, whether or not he should make even far greater sacrifices than those which our plans propose for the purpose of doing so much good? Or can he soberly balance the healthy delirium of his temperate indulgences with the high and the dignified satisfaction of sacrificing such artificial comforts for the sake of a sister's happiness, that "sober certainty of waking bliss?"*

But we have done.

The object which we have in view is unquestionably good; the remedy which we propose is lawful, efficient, and practicable; the sacrifice of personal comfort which our plans involve is demanded upon the principles of the purest christian benevolence; and expediency begs in pity for the long resisted concession. There are thousands of other arguments in favour of our subject, to which we have never alluded; and the only difficulty that we have felt in addressing you, has arisen from the necessity of leaving unnoticed such an abundance of rich and overwhelming evidence. Even now we are compelled to practice self-denial still farther, and to close our address when the discussion is scarcely begun.

Pause not, then, ye aged fathers that are around us in embracing our cause, lest the prodigality of your children should bring your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; hesitate not, ye warm-hearted and high-minded youth that are before us, in rallying round our standard, lest ye fall before the desolating progress of intemperance; delay not ye who constitute the tenderest part of our audience, delay not in giving impulse to a struggle which involves all that is dear to your hearts, and which, by your personal influence, may yet save from destruction a father, or a brother, or a "bosom friend, dearer than all!" Let all with generous ardour engage in the glorious contest—a contest which bears the character of genuine magnificence—a contest which has for its object the happiness of man and the glory of God—a contest whose triumphs are the pleasures of home and the endearments of the social circle—a contest which is identified with the achievements of the cross, and whose trophies will mingle with the splendid realities of an eternal world!

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* Milton's Comus.

THE NECESSITY OF FASTING AND HUMILIATION FOR OUR SINS;

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN CLARKSTON CHAPEL, NEAR AIRDRIE, ON THURSDAY, 23D JULY, 1835, BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR FASTING AND HUMILIATION, AND IS PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONGREGATION, UNTO WHOM IT IS AFFECTIONATEY DEDICATED BY THEIR MINISTER AND FRIEND

The Rev. JOHN MURDOCH,
Airdrie.

"*I go mourning all the day long.*"—PSALM XXXVIII. 6.

MEN and brethren, king David of Israel appears to have been a man warmly possessed of the most acute and tender sensibility in feeling—a man whose whole heart and soul was ever keenly and tenderly alive to the kindness of his friends, as well as capable of being deeply wounded by their contemptuous neglect or unkindness. The psalm from which our text has been selected, is characterized as being a psalm designed to bring to his remembrance things that were past; and from the complexion of the impression thereby produced upon his mind, we clearly learn that the things they brought to his remembrance must have been very bitter and painful—highly dishonourable to God, as well as hurtful to himself or others. It was, indeed, nothing else than the pungent remembrance of his past transgressions which thus made him to walk so disconsolately, and so much grieved and downcast in spirit, even "mourning all the day long."

It is deeply to be lamented that we, the mortal and frail children of men, are so thoroughly and perversely depraved in both head and heart, as thus wickedly and ungratefully to sin against that great God who is confessedly our best friend and most bountiful benefactor; but having once sinned, (and, alas! which of us has not repeatedly and most perversely sinned against this God?) the next most hopeless and death-devoted mark, is to perceive such guilty creatures, so deeply debased in judgment, and so pollutedly impure in affection, walking erectly and proudly as if no evil nor crime could be laid to our charge. Such conduct is remarkably descriptive of the character of Satan and the fallen angels, who are spoken of as having been for ever driven out from heaven. It is not less vividly descriptive also of the present character of many of the dark-hearted followers of Satan now on earth. But, with all the right-hearted and humble followers of the Holy Lamb of God, the case is widely different; for, loving the Lord their God with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and ever delighting not a little in the promoting of the honour of his name, and the cause of his gospel truth, they ever painfully feel deeply grieved, under every fresh discovery in themselves, of any thing hateful in the sight, or grieving to, the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, when such a repentant and grieved or sin-sick sinner first becomes fully awakened to a true perception of his miserably rebellious, and eternal death-devoted condition and prospects, and when fearful and trembling in heart, he first begins seriously to look around him for relief or help, what does he behold? If he look upwards to heaven, he clearly perceives an holy and sin-avenging God, who has long and kindly befriended him much, but against whom he has most wickedly and ungratefully been rising up every day in impious rebellion, now terribly girding on the fury of his irresistible strength fearfully to execute merited vengeance upon his helpless head. If, under this alarming impression, he look downwards to hell, what does he behold? He vividly perceives the lake which, in the Gospel, is spoken of as ever burning with fire and brimstone, just yawning beneath, open and ready to receive him alive. If, under this terrific impression he anxiously look around him upon the world for help, what does he behold? He most vividly perceives it all in flames—its immoral propensities and passions all furiously excited, and glowing to scorch him as with the brand of destruction. If, shuddering in horror-struck amazement at such an outward review, he timidly, but anxiously look inward upon his own conscience and heart, what does he behold? He instantly and painfully discerns the worm that dieth not, just fatally laying hold upon his heart, and anxiously trying in every possible manner of way so to fasten its morbid tooth in his soul, that it may therein for ever abide, most

destructively and miserably tormenting him. And if, like the wounded Israelites, who had been bitten by the fiery flying serpents, he, while bitterly smarting under his pains and prospects, anxiously lift up his eye unto Christ, elevated upon the cross, what does he then behold? There, indeed, he clearly perceives a balm which is admirably fitted for mollifying and healing all his wounds; and a soft voice, sweetly issuing therefrom, is not indistinctly heard, kindly inviting him, and all such miserable sinners now on earth, instantly to be washed and anointed with the blood and the balm which is now flowing from the cross, that so divine peace and love may now and ever be sweetly enjoyed by them; but still when he painfully remembers how long all these gracious overtures, issuing so kindly and patiently from the lips of Christ, have been slightingly and most ungratefully trampled under foot by him, as if they had been an unholy thing, though not utterly despairing, but ever fondly hoping, how can he, under such impressions, but "go mourning all the day long?"—mourning not as those who have no hope, but as those who have most perversely been walking so unworthy of the hope thus inspired.

And, in conformity with the authoritative and friendly instructions of our ecclesiastical superiors, we all being now assembled together expressly for the purpose of presenting ourselves before the Lord in the penitent aspect of humiliation and grief, because of our personal and national sins, it now becomes my painful duty, in leading your devotions as plainly and palpably as possible, to unfold some of the many alarming symptoms of those numerous evils which seem to be so rapidly gathering all around us, and from which, rapidly lowering like a dark cloud, luridly full of every discordant passion and rancorously unholy feeling, there is daily issuing a devouring flood of spiritual desolation which, unless quickly stayed up by the good hand of our God, will, ere long, fearfully cover the whole land in which we dwell with a withering mildew or blight, sweeping into both present and future wretchedness countless millions of our race yet unborn, as well as many who now live.

And, in looking this subject straight in the face, the fearfully ominous features of both personal and national character which instantly crowd upon our view are so numerous, and all so painfully alarming to a Bible-instructed and God-fearing heart, that we scarcely well know which now to select as the more convincing points of illustration or of evidence, that, like the holy and penitent Psalmist, we all ought individually, most deeply, to "go mourning all the day long." Oh! may God, the Holy Spirit, guide our present meditations!

In trying to discharge the mournful duty unto which, with no small solicitude and apprehension, I am this day called, it seems not improper to begin at what is evidently the root and main-spring of all our present and future evils; and, in the name of Him whose I am, and whom I much love to serve, to urge that God is angry with us.

1st. Because, that highly favoured as a nation though we have long been, yet there is but little, or almost no personal piety to be found among us individually; because, that waxing fat like Jeshurun, we all have not less ungratefully than rebelliously kicked against the Lord, who hath kindly nourished and brought us up as children.

Fond am I, under every condition of possible good, kindly to hope the best; and ill would it become me undiscerningly to contend, that such individual and personal piety is all entirely banished from our land; for, in even the darkest and worst times of the Old Testament Church, even when the holy prophets and servants of God had almost entirely despaired of her longer existence, I find that the Lord never left himself without a witness, nor without a chosen number of faithful worshippers; and, in carefully revolving which subject, I find that, if it were not for the sake of such pious and faithful worshippers of God, destruction would often be instantly rained down upon the heads of those who will have none of his favour; and seeing that, as a nation and church, we are not yet utterly destroyed, I would fondly regard this fast as an evidence, that still the Lord hath among us some who regularly and faithfully bow the knee before him daily. Yet the fearful truth cannot be blinked; nay, lest the Lord strike me, it must be broadly stated, that but few in number are they who thus live in the daily exercise of personal piety and devotion towards God.

The personal piety towards God, of which I now speak, is not less modest than it is loving and pure. It naturally shrinks from the vulgar observation or rude gaze o man, but it much delights submissively to meet the eye of God in secret. It is utterly impossible that I, being a fallible and mortal creature like yourselves, can tell which

of you are now living in the delightful but modest exercise of such daily piety towards God—bowing the knee daily, and fervently making supplication daily, when no ear nor eye but that of God is upon you; but your consciences can surely tell, yea, and the Lord himself can tell which of you is, or is not, daily living in such habits of personal piety.

But are there among you such as rise early in the morning, and instantly hurry away to your own lawful employments without first piously bowing the knee in secret unto God? Or are there among you such as have this day come up hither without first secretly bowing the knee to implore the divine blessing upon yourselves and others. Such of you are just the very persons by whom the whole action or Church of God is much troubled, even as the whole camp of Israel was troubled with the sin of Achan; inasmuch as by such of you the Lord is daily being provoked to rain down judgments upon the land in which we live; and of such it is painfully believed that the numbers are small neither in multitude nor in sinfulness. But,

2d. The Lord is verily angry with us as a nation and church, because that domestic or family religion is almost entirely banished out of our habitations. Once it was widely different in this respect with the inhabitants of Scotland. Once the feeling ran so strong in favour of family religion, that a graceless family living without the daily worship of God was regarded as utterly worthless, and undeserving of confidence. Once the time was when the labours neither of the seed time nor of the harvest were felt to be retarded by the space of time spent morning and evening in the devotional worship of God. And some such families we fondly trust that there still are in our land; but, oh! how small their number, and how faint their piety! how lifeless and cold their love! and how frequently is the slighting scornfulness of the multitude impiously directed against them! Under which impressions, oh! how can we but "go mourning" even "all the day long" before God?

It is a mournful fact, that there are in our beloved land not a few families from whose assembled circle the sweet sound or voice of family prayer or praise has never yet been known to ascend up to God on high. And concerning such families, multitudes of whom I well know to be in this place, it is painful to think, and painful to speak. Not only are they a dishonour to God, enemies to Christ, and a curse to themselves, but they are also the fruitful source of much misery to the whole nation or church in whose vicinity or in whose bosom they may be now dwelling; for both the tares and the wheat grow up promiscuously together. And when such multitudes of professing christian families are daily pulling down curses, and but few anxiously pulling down blessings upon the heads of themselves and others, oh! how supremely merciful has not our God been, else we all should long ere this day have been entirely destroyed; and, under the contemplation of which cause of our continued exposure to the anger of God, well may we "go mourning all the day long." But,

3d. In seriously reviewing the present position of the professingly religious world, well may we exclaim, How can God be but angry with us as a nation and people deeply laden with iniquity and sin, when it is remembered, that not only are multitudes of the people thus become entirely dead, both as individuals and families, unto the love and practice of piety, but that multitudes even of the ministers themselves, who ought surely to be mild and living patterns of the Gospel which they profess to preach, are in almost every corner of the land found to be most malignantly reviling and hating one another! Oh! how deep the fatal degeneracy, when even such as pretend to pray for the pardon of sin are to be found wantonly vilifying such as may feel desirous of deeply humbling themselves before the Lord; and not only so, but even openly using all the means in their power to oppose or to prevent our quietly and modestly assembling together, in the name of the Lord, for such a work of affliction and humiliation.

Oh! how mournfully strong must be the power of Satan's kingdom over such, when their hearts thus impurely burn with such anger and wrath to behold the conscience-smit servants of the great God of salvation thus reverently kneeling before him in deeply penitential contrition and prayerful submission! If truly possessed of but even one single spark of good christian feeling or love, would they not rather much rejoice to behold us all thus assembled together devotionally to worship upon our bended knees before the Almighty, heartily confessing our sins, deeply mourning over them all the day long, and earnestly crying for deliverance and pardon? But so far from being thus affected by such a prospect, it

would appear that, like the savage persecutors of old, by whom our beloved land was once overrun, they would rather delight furiously to drive us from the throne of grace, and from the house of prayer, still to sin more and more; and can it but be noticed that, in this mournful work, the ministers of religion are the ringleaders of the people? And which view of society, as being simply diseased and poisoned, even at what ought to be the very fountain-head of purity and peaceful love in Christ, cannot but painfully affect the heart of every discerning christian person. Ah! does it not vividly disclose glaring symptoms of coming vengeance and wrath from heaven? And, under the contemplation of which, well may we "go mourning" before God even "all the day long." But,

4th. God is angry with us as a nation and church, also because of the utter neglect which is so openly manifested almost every where by parents in not more anxiously promoting the religious and moral instruction of their children; for, in passing through our land, especially near the scattered villages of our country, on a Sabbath evening, the children may be seen growing up, and running about, utterly regardless of God, and desecrating his Sabbaths just as if this our beloved native land had now unhappily been converted into a special nursery for annually replenishing the kingdom of Satan with fresh crops of polluted souls! And even although the means of religious instruction be partly provided for such children gratuitously by Sabbath teachers, yet their parents, in multitudes of such cases will not be troubled to apply them! So that polluted and bad though, as a nation or church, we may now be, it must be clear as demonstration itself, that, under such an influence and train of events, we shall ere long become much worse; for vice and sin, like every other kind of vermin, is well known rapidly to propagate itself; and the accumulated pollutions of such a rising generation of such depraved and thoroughtaught transgressors, we shudder to contemplate even in imagination. Oh! may the Lord, who is so much neglected, have compassion even upon such. But, once more,

5th. God is angry with us also, because that, as a church established for the spiritual and moral instruction of the people, we are now much degenerated and fallen from the high and holy position in which, as such, we once stood.

The Established Church of Scotland, considered as a religious institution, which is at once highly economical and efficient for accomplishing the purpose designed, has for long been the very admiration of all enlightened Christendom. Our forefathers, under the protection of heaven, warmly wrung it, with their life blood, from the reluctant hands of a profligate court and parliament; and, with its parish church and school, for nearly every thousand population, it soon raised the religious and moral character of our nation far above that of almost every other people known in the world; so that, go where they might, the sons of our beloved native land were generally soon found to rise to the head of their profession. In process of time, however, the numbers of people in our beloved land soon increased so as far to exceed the established means of religious and moral instruction that were thus provided; and, besides, as evils are said seldom to come single-handed, in process of time also numerous corruptions grew up within the Church itself, and by which the evils arising from an over-crowded population were greatly multiplied; and although these corruptions are now begun to be in some measure removed, yet, like the Israelites when returning from their long Babylonish captivity, we are exposed to so many deadly foes by the way, that like them we do well to proclaim a solemn fast for humiliation and prayerful committing of ourselves unto God. And timidly smarting under the pains arising from the numerous evils that lie still lurking within our own breast, as well as under the unhallowed strokes of our numerous enemies from without, it becomes us, with much contrition, to draw near unto God, "mourning before him all the day long." "Going and weeping, it becomes us now to go seriously to seek the Lord our God: yea, even to ask the way to Zion, with our faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. SAMUEL MARTIN, Bathgate.
SERMON by the late Rev. DR. HAMILTON, Strathblane.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO DIE IN THE LORD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. J. B. PATTERSON, AT FALKIRK, 5TH JULY, 1835,

By the Rev. SAMUEL MARTIN,
Minister of the Parish of Bathgate.

"*But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*"—LUKE xxiii. 28.

THE Evangelist has brought his narrative up to the time, at which our Lord was led forth as a lamb to the slaughter. In the preceding part of it we have presented to us the traitor, who had sold his Master for a vile price, conducting the band of armed soldiers forth, in the silence of the night, to the secret place to which he knew that Christ retired for quiet and undisturbed devotion. The tauntings and insults, to which he was exposed in the High Priest's house, even at the hands of those who were set to administer righteous judgment unto all, are simply detailed. Next in the picture we have the delivering of him over to the hands of the Roman governor, with the false and most invidious accusation, that he was a mover of sedition, and stirred up the people against Cæsar, their king. Sent to Herod by Pilate, who would fain have pronounced no judgment in the case, the meek and patient sufferer was decked with the ensigns of royalty; whilst, with feigned homage, but, in reality, with contumelious treatment, they mocked and set him at nought. Brought back to Pilate again, the judge declared to his vehement accusers, "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: I will therefore chastise him, and release him." Verses 14—16. But this only awakened the more the rage, with which his malicious enemies sought his death. And, after clamorously crying for mercy rather to a murderer, they indicated their wish regarding Christ by the horrid shout, "Crucify him! crucify him!" A third time the governor, whose feelings revolted at the injustice to which they urged him, whilst his infirmity of purpose prevented him from offering decisive opposition to their unrighteous wishes, a third time he expostulated with them, and sought to procure their consent to his setting of Christ free. But when the solicitation to which he, judge and ruler, condescended, when he should have spoken in the tone of righteous authority, failed, and they still "were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified," he, against his own declared conviction of what was just, yielded, and "gave sentence that it should be as they required." He released the murderer, and "Jesus he delivered to their will." Verses 23—25. Now within their power, no delay of execution was permitted

by those who so strangely and unrighteously thirsted for his blood. They led him immediately towards Calvary. Whilst on his way to the spot where he was to be lifted up from the earth, he was encompassed by other attendants beside his persecutors and the soldiers. "There followed him a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him." Verse 27. He turned to them—the victim of such malice and unholy wrath, of false accusations, and of avowed unrighteousness in judgment. Yet, strange, no indignation flashed in his eye; no bitterness, no imprecations of vengeance were found in his lips. Amidst the great company who bewailed and lamented him, it might have required but one word of appeal to their strong sympathy on his behalf—but one indignant display of the injustice done him, to have turned their awakened feelings against his oppressors, and to have engaged them in an attempt, at least, for his rescue. But, lo, even then the self-denying Saviour, whose life had been one unvarying manifestation of concern for others, whilst for himself he seemed hardly concerned at all, lost sight of his own condition, of the injustice by which he was sacrificed, and of the agony and shame which were awaiting him. His heart, even then, was not insensible to the misery of others, nay, was full of compassion for them; "Daughters of Jerusalem," were his words, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children."

In such a display of our Lord's feelings and character, we have a most comforting assurance afforded us of the sympathy which dwells in the breast of our great High Priest. If even in the deepest distress, which, as we know, commonly stuns the feelings altogether, and renders the sufferer insensible to the evils of others, he was not merely alive to the miseries of those around him, but felt for them with a compassion as perfect as if no affliction attended or threatened himself, oh! how full must his sympathy be with his people now! Not even those circumstances which seal up human sympathies, or which rather render men altogether incapable of appreciating the trials of others, and therefore of feeling for them, could in his earthly pilgrimage diminish the keenness of his sensibility to the evils and dangers of men. And now that no such obstacle exists to resist and check the free flowing forth of his pity for men's distresses, and of his sympathy in his people's trials, how calmly and confidently may they carry their griefs to Him, whose ear will be open to their cry; and, like the beloved Apostle, pillow their heads on his bosom, assured that "in all their afflictions he is afflicted."

The crowd to which our Lord addressed the words of the text, doubtless contained in it men of different characters. Both of the great classes, into which men may always be divided, believers and unbelievers, had their representatives there. There were true and devoted servants of Christ, though their real feelings towards him might be suppressed in that hour of peril. And there were others, who, whatever movements of regard or pity they might feel towards him, were yet in reality not his disciples, not having been persuaded to give him the submission which he claimed. Let us attend to the words of our Lord, as conceiving them addressed first to the one class and then to the other.

I. Let us consider them as addressed to that part of the multitude who had believed in his divine mission, and submitted to his authority. Though our Lord's ministry amongst the children of men seems not to have been attended with that amount of success which we might have been ready to anticipate, nay, was so much resisted and rejected, that he complained, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life," "I have stretched out my hands all day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people," yet it was not fruitless. Some were won to the knowledge and belief of the truth. The works which testified that in Him there dwelt a power more than human, and which attracted the wondering eyes of the most careless, led some to receive and to honour him as sent from God. The words which made the officers sent to seize him declare, "Never man spake like this man," came home to some with all the authority and influence which the words of God should have. Impressed by these, and won by his example, which exhibited a purity and holiness such as mere human nature never displayed in this earthly scene, disciples were found acknowledging that God was with him; that he was a teacher sent from God; nay, confessing in more explicit testimony, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God: to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Not unnatural it assuredly was for these disciples to mourn; and the stronger their love to Jesus was, the more must the indignities and sufferings

which were heaped on him have afflicted them. Yet their sorrow did not spring from the proper source. His truest disciples partook of the common misapprehensions of their countrymen about the nature of Messiah's kingdom. It was an earthly kingdom, a dominion established and maintained by outward power, for which they looked. The image of a victorious monarchy haunted them to the very last of Christ's abiding on earth. In his closing interview with his Apostles but a few minutes "before he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight," they showed the old desire and expectation still cleaving fast to them, when they said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And whilst their feelings, as men, were pained by his evil treatment, and their love afflicted in the sufferings of their Master, they wept also that these expectations should be defeated, and these hopes destroyed in their Lord's submitting to ignominy, and being led forth to death, instead of claiming all honour and homage as his own, and enforcing his claim, by the mighty power of which they knew him to be possessed, and which they, as his servants, would have been so ready to second. Thus they should not have wept for him; and over him personally they should not have wept. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished," said our Lord, looking forward with calmness and desire to that baptism with blood, in the endurance of which his earthly task should be done, and all its toils and sorrows ended. And had his disciples truly entered into their Lord's feelings, as they ought to have done, they would in like manner have looked forward to that event which now filled their hearts with sorrow. They would, as he told them on another occasion, "have rejoiced, because he was going to the Father." True, there were sufferings before him, bitter, aggravated sufferings. But they should be short; and in them should be brought to a close his course of humiliation, and trial, and scorn, and again should he dwell in ineffable glory and delight with the Father, from whose loving embrace he had come forth.

And had they understood, as they might that the sufferings to which Christ was now ..ed forth were the very means by which he should bring to pass the great purposes of his mission, should secure the glory of his Father, and the redemption of men, and render for ever sure to the guilty the blessings of a heavenly inheritance, they would have looked forward to his decease with the hope that even in it he was about to gain the object of his longing desire, and to crown his labours with assured triumph. "Weep," said our Lord, therefore, "not for me."

Yet sorrow was their proper mood of feeling, "Weep for yourselves, and your children." And why, my friends, should they have wept for themselves and their children, in looking upon the sufferings of their Lord?

1. We reply, because their sins occasioned Christ's sufferings. In the eye of man the life of Christ was altogether blameless; so that after all the accusations which malicious ingenuity and hostile rage could devise, the judge was compelled to declare openly, "I find no fault in this man." And, in the sight of God, that life, which man could not convict of crime, appeared perfectly spotless; for "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," was the testimony which he received from the most excellent glory. But whilst Christ "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," we are not left ignorant how sufferings and death, of which sin is the only source, were appointed to him as his portion. It was our sin imputed to him which brought him to experience those bitter fruits, which are the proper and necessary consequence of sin. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." The law pronounced, concerning every transgressor, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But that this fearful curse might not descend on all like a withering thunderbolt, Christ interposed. "Christ hath redeemed us," says Paul concerning himself and his fellow-believers, "from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." When his believing followers, then, attended Christ from the judgment-hall, and looked forward with dismay and sorrow to the bitter sufferings of the excruciating death to which he was doomed, was not this the consideration, that should have most overwhelmed their spirits, that it was their sins, and the sins of those who should be the children of their faith, that brought Christ to that hour of agony and shame? Had they understood aright the mysterious arrangements of God's grace in connexion with Christ's death; had they known that, condemned unrighteously

by men, he was dealt with by God as condemned, on account of their sins; had they perceived that they, more truly than his ignorant and infuriated persecutors, were the cause of his death, how much deeper would their sorrow have been when they wept for themselves and for their children? Looking on him whom they had pierced, rather than the soldiers who nailed him to the cross, they would have mourned for him, as one mourneth for a first-born, and been in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for an only child.

Such sorrow each believer should feel. When we look on the last scenes of Jesus of Nazareth, they present such a picture of cruel oppression, persecuting helpless innocence, as could not fail to awaken a measure of sentimental sorrow, were he one wholly unconnected with us. But when, my believing friends, we look at those scenes as appointed to Christ, because he was the substitute of the guilty; when we think that it was our sins which brought him to the dust of death, that each sin of ours came in upon his soul, and added to that intolerable weight of anguish which made him say, "Mine iniquities," the iniquities laid on him, "have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me," will not our sorrow be far deeper and more intense, a sorrow that will bow us down in most lowly contrition at the foot of Christ's cross? It were well for us oftener to weep thus for ourselves.

2. They should have wept for themselves and their children, because they should no more hear Christ's instructions. His instructions his true followers had found to be most precious. Not only had these instructions set in a just light the commandments of God, which the traditions and false doctrines of men had obscured and corrupted; not only had they delivered his disciples from many errors, under the bondage of which the rest of their countrymen still groaned, but they were "the words of eternal life." They spake of no trifling matters. They spake not of matters which, however important, reach not beyond the grave. The words of Christ disclosed eternal life, showed the path by which it is to be reached, and gave his followers a firm assurance of obtaining it. Eternal life, that greatest of all blessings, that noblest of all inheritances, consummate in its happiness and glory, thirsted for by man, yet forfeited by his sin, Christ's words brought near, and made sure to all that receive them. In no other did these words dwell. The scribes had them not. The baptist sent men to Christ to hear them; and no other, as those knew to whom Christ's words were spirit and life, could guide their feet into the way of peace and life. And now, then, that they were about to lose that instructor, the worth and power of whose words they knew and rejoiced in, there was a substantial cause of sorrow afforded them; and when they thought that his words of life and salvation should no more fall on their ear; that he should no more speak to them those blessed counsels which were changing them into new men, and preparing them for the joys of everlasting life; that he should no more walk forth amongst them, and enter their families, and say with his winning kindness, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," and pour into their youthful ears the words of salvation, and lay his hands on them, and bless them, well might they weep for themselves and for their children.

With the loss of Christ's instructions would come also the thought of the little profit which they had made of all his teaching. They would remember how slow of heart they had been to believe what he announced; how unwillingly they had given up the false ideas in which they had been previously trained; how very backward they had been to comprehend the more noble and spiritual doctrine which he taught, and to perceive its infinite superiority to the vain traditions and absurd comments of their former teachers; how little they yet understood of his instructions; how many things they understood not at all; and how careless withal they had been of the abundant opportunities they had had of learning the way of life more perfectly. And combining their little profiting with the loss of that instructor, into whose "lips grace was poured," and whose counsels breathed of it continually, it was but right that they should weep for themselves.

There is not one of us, my believing friends, who has not, in this respect also, cause to weep for himself. We never, indeed, were instructed by Christ's own lips; and we know the provision which he made for the training and instructing of his people, by sending his Spirit to guide them into all

truth. But which of us has not to mourn over his exeeedingly slow growth in heavenly knowledge and understanding? Which of us, in looking at the death of Christ, and mourning for him, should not weep for his own backwardness to learn the instructions which that event so emphatically conveys? Where are there presented to us with such distinctness, and with so irresistible evidence, as in the cross of Christ, God's hatred of sin, and unchanging determination to punish it, its ruinousness, utter and fearful, to every one who abides in it, and its sinful and malignant nature? And whence then do there come pleadings and persuasions so forcible as those with which the cross would induce us to forsake sin? Where are furnished to us proofs so strong as the cross furnishes, of the compassion of God, and his marvellous love to a guilty world? Where motives so strong to trust in him, to follow after holiness, and to devote ourselves in soul and body to the service of the Lord and his Christ? And yet how dull have we shown ourselves in learning these lessons, how little acquainted with their practical energy! Oh! whilst we mourn in contemplating the death of Christ, let us weep over the hardness of our own hearts, on which all the impressive demonstrations of the cross of Christ have so little influence, and which remain, alas! so stubbornly attached to the world and sin, so dead to holiness, and so little conformed to the mind and example of our Lord.

II. Another class, besides true oelievers, mingled in the crowd, which attended Christ towards Calvary. Let us consider the application of our text to them. It is plain, that many, who were in reality unbelievers, joined in the lamentations which were poured forth around Jesus. For when the disciples were assembled together after his ascension, we read, that "the number of the names was one hundred and twenty," a very different band, assuredly, from the "great eompany who bewailed and lamented him." And there is little wonder that many should bewail him, who were not real disciples of his, who doubted, or who had never considered his claims to be honoured as the Holy One of God. His works, which were not more characterized by the power which accomplished them, than by the beneficence which eontinually presided over them, directing them ever to the supply of men's need, or to the removal of their afflictions, to the cure of their diseases, or the recovery of their lives; his words, which breathed gentleness and kindness, and embodied ever in them the "peace on earth, and goodwill to the children of men," which were proclaimed by the heavenly host at his birth, these interested many, these gained the regard and esteem of many, who understood not his real eharacter, who perhaps would have rejected with strong dislike his holy and self-denying doctrine, and who therefore received him not aright. In the minds of such persons, feelings of regret and pity would be awakened by the sad spectacle which they now witnessed. And when, in contrast with his uniform kindness and profitableness to men, they looked on the treatment which he received in requital at their hands, the manifest injustice of his condemnation, as avowed even by the judge who condemned him, the spite and malignity which so plainly animated his accusers and persecutors, and the miserable death which he, who had oft rescued others from death, was about to undergo, they eould hardly but weep. But they wept *for him*. It was the natural feelings, which prompt us to take part in any circumstances with the distressed, and which are pained, when innocence, or, at least, benevolence is oppressed, that caused their tears to pour down. Right and worthy were these emotions, so far as they went; but they had deeper cause for sorrow than any thing they thought of when they wept. They should have wept for themselves and for their children. Here, too, I may specify two reasons, which should have made them weep for themselves and for their ehildren.

1. Because away from them were about to be taken the word of salvation, the admonitions and warnings of the Lord. Amongst that ehosen people, on whom divine favour so peculiarly rested, God had raised up a succession of prophets and servants, whom he honoured to make known his counsel and will. But whilst he accredited these prophets to Israel, and by their instrumentality gradually unfolded much of his purpose eoncerning men, their great office was to lead the thoughts of their countrymen forward to a greater than themselves, of whom they were but feeble types, and to whom, as the Prophet, the great and special instructor of men, all were eommanded to hearken. The office of the lesser prophets was swallowed up in him, as the stars are in the light of the rising sun. He, who was "the brightness of the

Father's glory, and the express image of his person," was to make known, in all fulness and completeness, the Godhead and the truth of God. Now, that instructor, that counsellor, had come. He, whose words were to be law, as those of Moses had been, who, in fulfilling the prophesies and promises, should make them plain, had come. He had poured light around. He had brought the full revelation of the Almighty's gracious purpose. In his doctrine and person he had concentrated, and presented in bright effulgence, the scattered lights of all the previous prophets, and added to them a fulness and glory which were all his own. And now, long desired, long looked for, though by many not recognised when he came, he was going away; he was thrust away; the word of salvation which he brought was removing; and, so far as human power could go, the light of the world was about to be extinguished. Had they known this, they would have wept for themselves and their children, about to be left in deeper darkness, by losing the true light which had shone amongst them.

True, the light was not at once removed from their land. The chosen companions of our Lord's earthly labours, whom he left behind him, continued to proclaim in Judea the word of salvation, and to preach unto their countrymen the unsearchable riches of Christ. But this, which the apostles did not then know, their countrymen could not have known; and ought, therefore, for themselves and their children, to have wept, as about to have hid from them the true light, which alone can "enlighten every man who cometh into the world." And, in truth, though the apostles continued for a season to make known in Judea the salvation of our God, yet the extinguishing, so far as they could, of the light which Christ brought, sealed the condition of the Jews as a nation. The apostles, though having partial success, met with resistance, opposition, and evil treatment, such as their Lord had experienced, till they said, "Since ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." And in their former darkness the Jews were left groping their way like blinded men. It should have made them weep for themselves and their children, thus to lose "the days of the Son of Man," of which Christ had warned them they should long to see even one, and should not see it.

Not in this manner is the word of salvation now taken away from an individual or a nation; and yet those who look with somewhat of sentimental sorrow on the death of Christ, may be called on the same account to weep for themselves. There is a time beyond which, as God's word warns, his Spirit shall not strive with men; and the man who has refused the light, shall be left undisturbed in the darkness which he prefers. We cannot tell regarding any man when this sad condition, so worthy to be lamented, the prelude of hopeless despair, begins. But this we can tell, that the man who contemplates the death of Christ, or has it brought before him in the preaching of the Gospel, and dismisses it without learning somewhat of those instructions and of those emphatic views of the truth which it presents, is seeking to send away the word of salvation from his soul, and to extinguish the light of life, and is hastening on to a position, from which if he be not kept back by grace, now despised, that light shall for him be extinguished altogether. It matters not what interest he may take in the death of Christ, or what feelings of regret and pain the contemplation of it may excite in his mind, or what purposes he may form of yet returning to the matter, and attending to its bearings on himself. In failing to learn, in not caring to learn, from it now, those lessons of practical godliness which it teaches, he is bidding the light away from him. And will it be wonderful if the despised gift should be withdrawn? Oh! this is a condition over which every one acquainted with the power of Christ's death, and with the worth of his salvation, and acquainted too with the deceitfulness of the human heart, may mourn as fearfully dangerous. And, oh! weep for yourselves ye who are in it, ye who have not learnt from Christ's death; else ye shall mourn unavailingly in the day of hopeless and desperate sorrow.

2. They should have wept for themselves and for their children, because this act by which Christ was taken away would speedily bring judgment upon their nation. To this our Lord had most express reference, as he showed by the language which follows the text: "Weep not for me, but for yourselves, and your children; for, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills,

Cover us." A time of terrible judgment was coming upon them, when every domestic bond, the source, in times of peace, of so many endearments, and so much happiness, should be converted into a source of such misery, that they should be pronounced blessed who never knew such bonds; when destruction so inevitable should pursue them, that in their despair they should call on the mountains and hills to fall on them, and to hide them. Their nation were putting away the light of salvation and the word of mercy from them—doing it in the most fearful and decisive way, by putting to death him who brought them—by slaying the Prince of life, and crucifying the Lord of glory. And when grace is taken away from individuals or a nation, judgment is near at hand. It may hang over them for a while, like the murky thunder-cloud; but soon the lightning of heaven will pierce the darkness, and the avenging bolt descend on their devoted heads. And, oh! what cause was there for the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for themselves and their children, when their nation was accomplishing that fatal deed which should awaken the tempest's voice, and bring on them such desolation, as, according to the Prophet's annunciation, would make the ears of every one who heard thereof to tingle!

It was the despising of Christ, and the putting of him to death, that brought down at last the consuming wrath of God on that chosen people, who had so often rebelled, and been so often restored. It is the despising of that death, of the love which it displays, and of the mercy which it makes sure, that brings down judgment now on the sinful soul. Every act of such despising, every act of resistance to that love, every refusal of that mercy, is an advance towards the point at which mercy will no longer wait, but judgment arrays itself to go forth. And oh! how many, then, are there, who need to weep for themselves, inasmuch as they have long resisted all applications of the love and mercy of God—all entreaties of the Saviour's compassion? Christ, exhibiting as to Didymus of old his wounded hands, and feet, and side, hath besought them, by the strong love which these testify, to yield themselves to him as their Lord and Redeemer. And they have refused in stubborn unbelief, and have remained in their sins; and thus have they brought judgment nigh to them, and nearly sinned away their day of grace. What cause have they to mourn over their madness and insensibility, and to tremble, lest they should be amongst those, who, at meeting with Christ, shall cry with despairing voice to the rocks and mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Oh! that now they would weep for themselves in broken-hearted sorrow, that yet the Lord may return to them in mercy, and save them with a great salvation.

When Christ himself was going to death, he said to the weeping multitudes who surrounded him, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children." And when he, the Head of the Church, the Master of all its ministers, who gives his commission to every herald of the cross, is pleased to take away a faithful and devoted pastor, whether at noon or at evening-tide, he says to the flock, from whom he takes him, "Weep not for him, but for yourselves and your children." Such, my friends, is his voice to you in the dispensation which he has sent into the midst of you. You do sorrow. The slow funeral knell which fell on my ear as I approached this place, spoke to all around of the event which is uppermost in your minds this day, as one which awakened general sadness. And the crowds assembled to witness the discharge of the last offices to the hapless dust, whom manifestly not mere curiosity, but sympathizing feeling, had brought together—the stillness which pervaded the multitude, and the general and spontaneous suspension of business—all told us, all around me now tells, that the common and ruling emotion in this community is the feeling of unfeigned sorrow. And whilst it has its place in your breasts, listen to the admonition, "Weep not for him, but for yourselves and your children." His is the gain; yours is the loss. "Weep not for him." His trials are over. His afflictions, whether of body or of mind, have ceased. All tears have been wiped away from his eyes for ever. He hath entered into the joy of his Lord. "Weep for yourselves and your children," who shall no more listen to the words of heavenly wisdom from his lips, no more be guided by him in the way of peace, or directed to the everlasting consolations and good hopes through grace which the Gospel makes known. "Weep not for him." His struggles are ended; his warfare is accomplished; he has finished his course, and kept the faith, and won the conqueror's

crown. "Weep for yourselves and your children," whom he shall not again lead forth to fight the battles of the Lord, whom he shall not again help to arm yourselves with the whole armour of God, or cheer with the thought of the presence of the great Captain of Salvation, and with his precious promises of support, and in whose behalf he shall not again, like Moses, spread forth his hands in prayer, when you meet your spiritual foes. "Weep not for him." That dust, which we committed to the grave, awaits a glorious resurrection. He was of the sons of God. And concerning them, "it doth not yet appear what they shall be; but we know, that when Christ appears, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is." Your departed pastor had on him, in large measure, the marks of the child of God. His unaffected humility, (much as he had, humanly speaking, to boast of,) his deep and ardent devotion, so richly displayed in the variety, the earnestness, the broken-hearted contrition, the fervency, and frequent sublimity of his prayers (as if he looked on the invisible God), his perfect integrity, his studious obedience of God's law, his diligence in duty, his large-hearted charity in thought, and language, and act, his warm love and intimate knowledge of the word of God—which manifestly was the great subject of his meditations, and the chosen nourishment of his soul—the lively and steady interest which he took in the prosperity of Christ's work and kingdom, and his laboriousness to advance these in his own soul, amongst his flock, and every where—these showed the love and the temper of a child of God to be in him abundantly. When he was drawing on to death, the approach of which strips off any disguise that may have been worn during life, his heavenly discourse proved the love of God, which passeth all understanding, to be keeping his heart and mind through Christ Jesus. And when, under the pressure of his mortal sickness, the feeble frame was sinking, and the mind wandered unconscious of all around it, even then his expressions showed a soul which had habitually dwelt in high and holy communion with God—a soul, into which brighter visions, than earthly eye beholds, were breaking, and which was preparing its wings to flee away to the mansions of eternal light. And, therefore, in the persuasion, consoling and gladdening even midst tears, we can rest, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, he shall appear with him in glory, forming one of that splendid train who come to witness and to share in the Redeemer's triumph. "Weep not then for him, but for yourselves and your children."

I mean not, my friends, to enter at length on a description of the character of your departed pastor. His talents of the first order, which, improved as they were with unwearied diligence, and put forth in all their energy, made his career from his very first entering the lists of academical competition a distinguished one; his calm and unvarying serenity of mind—an index of a heart at peace with God; his nobility of mind rendering him utterly incapable of any thing base or mean; his native kindliness of disposition, sweetened still more by grace, which rendered him one of the most attractive exemplifications of the gentle virtues and lowly graces of the christian temper which I ever beheld, which prevented the weakest from feeling abashed before his superior talents and attainments, which made every one who approached him love him, which made those who knew him well give him a very high place in their affections, and which bound those, who stood in still nearer relations to him, with the strongest bonds—bonds, the real strength of which they are able to appreciate only in the deep distress with which the rupture of them hath filled their hearts—these, and the other features of character which in their harmonious combination, marked him out as a full-orbed Christian, a Christian not complete, indeed, but advancing towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, I leave to your own recollections, aided as these have been by the descriptions of my friend, whom longer and more intimate acquaintance with your late minister fitted better for portraying his character.

I might bear my testimony, were it needful, to the faithfulness and talent with which he fulfilled his duties as a member of Church courts. For these duties he was careful to prepare himself by a diligent study of the constitution of the Church, and of its laws and acts. To the knowledge thus attained he added most ready eloquence, quick sagacity in discerning the true bearings of every business or measure discussed, and most unflinching adherence to conscientious convictions, which no gentleness of spirit or influence of retiring modesty ever brought

him to compromise or to suppress. And hence he was led to take an active, and was rising to take an influential, share in the discussions of these courts.

But, my friends, let me only for a moment remind you, who sat under his ministry, of the high privileges which you enjoyed. You were privileged, as few congregations are. Such a rich union of gifts and graces as adorned your late pastor we seldom behold. They gave to his ministrations a fulness, a richness, a savour, and an impressiveness, which are rarely equalled. There was in him the power of intellect, which could pierce deep into the mysteries of providence and grace, and the clearness and simplicity of conception which could unfold these mysteries to almost the feeblest. And thus was he fitted for being the teacher of both the learned and unlearned, of both the wise and the simple. There was the vigour of imagination, which, drawing its materials from a wide circle, from ample stores of ancient and modern literature, gave life and animation to the most abstract discussions, clothed his compositions with the most finished elegance, and often gave to them a peculiarly etherial tone, in which the soul was carried away from the grossness of the present world, and the grovellings of sense, to the enraptured contemplation of the glorious things which have been revealed unto faith. There was an unfeigned love to the work in which he was engaged, which made him always an interested and, therefore, interesting instructor. There was not merely a knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel but an imbuing of his whole trains of thought with them; so that they were brought forth in his preaching without effort or labour in all their native majesty and grace. There was a deep sensibility in his own soul of the power of the truth; an intimate, joyful, and saving acquaintance with its convincing, sanctifying, and consoling influence; an experimental knowledge of the application, to the evils and distresses of our sinful state, of all the forms of threatening and promise, of terror and hope, of warning and consolation, in which the truth is set forth—which alone can make a minister skilful in the word of life, a workman needing not to be ashamed, dividing unto all a portion in due season. There was, above all, an ardent desire for the Redeemer's glory, springing from knowledge of the great love wherewith Christ had loved him, a lively sense of the unspeakable preciousness of his salvation, of the worth of immortal souls, and of the awful wretchedness of those that are "without God, and without hope in the world," which imparted all the earnestness and power of the most fervid eloquence to his expostulations with sinners, and the entreaties with which he besought them to flee to "the covert from the tempest, and the refuge from the storm;" and to the exhortations with which he strove to engage believers to walk worthy of the holy name by which they are called.

And now the ministrations, in which these elements mingled, and which were therefore of so noble and impressive a kind, are over. In the mysterious arrangements of God, whose "footsteps are in the sea, and whose ways are not known," there has been removed from the Church one so fitted to be its ornament, and from his sphere of earthly labour one so well able to fill it, so amply furnished for commending the Gospel of Christ to the careless, and for bringing its consolations home to the weakest believer, and so willing to spend, and be spent, in his Lord's work. With his meek and unostentatious deportment you shall no more be edified. The rich and full-toned swell of his melodious voice shall no more fall on your ear. It hath become more melodious in hymning the songs of praise to God and the Lamb, which echo through the heavenly temple. That mind, which rising on the strong wings of faith and hope, soared upwards, and oft bore delighted hearers along with it to the very borders of the beatific vision, no more shall pour out before you its glowing conceptions and ravishing discoveries. It glows with conceptions still nobler, and discovers for itself, in the person and work of Emmanuel, and in the fulness of God, unknown glories, which fill it with unutterable delight and with deepest adoration. And what, my friends, remains with you, on whom were bestowed the whole of the brief ministrations of this "able minister of the New Testament?" Oh! are you of those, respecting whom his account shall be given in with joy, or of those respecting whom it shall be given in with grief? Oh! have you been won to the love of Christ and the choice of his service? or have you continued in unbelief and enmity to God? What profit have your souls gained as the fruit of your high privileges? It is calculated to make us start that, in the midst of his career, when I

powers were just attaining their meridian splendour; when experience was adding more point and energy to his warnings and counsels, and deeper tenderness to all his beseechings of men to be reconciled unto God; when affection for him was growing in the hearts of his hearers, and his influence was increasing over all around, which would have procured still more attention to his ministry, and imparted a greater power to his words; that even then, younger than almost one half of you, he should be cut down, and for ever removed from all his prospects of usefulness in the vineyard of the Lord. But, oh! the thought should just come back on you with double force, "Are we amongst the seals of his ministry or not?" The time is hastening on (present health and strength are no security against its rapid advance) when, as he hath gone to give an account of his stewardship, you too, to whom as a good steward he dispensed the mysteries of God, must render your account of your profiting, when your improvement shall be tried of those good days of the Son of Man, in which a heart of love, and a spirit of unquenchable ardour, and a tongue of power, poured forth in your hearing the tidings of the Saviour's compassion, and besought dying sinners to hearken, that their souls might live. Oh! that in that day it may not prove to your condemnation, that your rich privileges were unimproved, and that the impressive manner in which the words of eternal life were urged upon you had altogether failed to arrest you, and to turn you to the Lord! At such a season as this, you are specially called to consider your past profiting in the knowledge of the truth, and in the experience of its power. And would you set yourselves to this work, whilst your hearts are softened with recent sorrow, there might be brought home to you such a sense of neglect and misimprovement, as would effectually lead you henceforward to prize the days of the son of Man, to set high value on every privilege and mean of grace; and thus this time might prove an era in your spiritual history—an era, at which many were brought to a first, but an abiding, acquaintance with the grace of our Lord Jesus, and at which many, whose first acquaintance with the ways of godliness is not to form, received an impulse and quickening, which will carry them forward with ever-growing alacrity, till they appear before God in Sion. Oh! that, reversing the result at Samson's departure, who slew in his death more than he slew in his life, your pastor's death might be made the means of spiritual life to more souls than the labours of his life have been! Oh! that, if glorified spirits know these earthly things, the tidings may reach his spirit, now rejoicing in the presence of God and the Lamb, but which on earth was often bowed down by the little success which he witnessed of his labours, that that people, amongst whom he laboured and prayed, and who shall see his face no more, have arisen, as with one heart and mind, to seek the Lord, and to say, with deliberate choice, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

SOCIAL MEETINGS FOR PRAYER.

[We extract the following from a sermon recently published,* delivered by the late Rev. Dr. Hamilton of Strathblane. It was preached before the Glasgow Corresponding Society for Prayer—a society which we need hardly say meets with, as it merits our highest commendation. This sermon was one of the last delivered by the late much lamented author of it, and adds another to the many laurels with which his memory will ever be embalmed in the recollection of every pious Christian. We earnestly recommend this sermon to the notice of our readers.]

Prayer meetings are small assemblies of Christians, for the purpose of promoting their mutual edification and comfort, by drawing nearer to God, strengthening the bonds which unite them to each other, and rendering themselves more useful in their day, and becoming more meet for heaven.

These meetings are spent in praise and prayer, in reading the Scriptures, and conversing on the great truths which they con-

* M. Ogle & Son, Glasgow.

tain, and applying them to the different duties and trials of life.

It is the practice of these societies to spread before God any event peculiarly distressing in their own condition, or in the situation of their families, the congregations to which they belong, the nation, the Church of Christ, or the world at large; and to entreat that he would adapt the dispensatious of his providence, and the communications of his grace, to their several exigencies.

Their principal design is to promote the growth of grace in their own souls, to advance the interests of piety in their families and neighbourhoods, and ensure its diffusion through the earth, and its triumph among all nations.

And can it be necessary to insist upon the advantage and importance of these societies?

No objects can be more sublime and interesting than those which these associations have in view; and their results are noble and delightful.

They have a beneficial effect upon our personal piety—the revival of religion in our country, and its propagation throughout all the earth.

They are conducive to our personal piety.

If, indeed, we wish for no more religion than what consists in forms and appearances; which requires us to go through outward duties and observances, but which leaves the heart cold, dull, and unaffected; which leaves us in a state of conformity to the world, destitute of nearness to the Most High, and strangers to the light of his countenance, and the joys of his salvation; we have no need to unite in these associations, and give ourselves to extraordinary prayer. It will be perfectly sufficient to keep up a form of devotion in secret, to go through a dry and lifeless round of family worship, and appear once or twice in our pew on Sabbath.

But if we dare not rely on outward observances; if we are terrified at the form without the power of godliness; if we tremble at the idea of having a name to live, while we are dead; if we long for fellowship with God, and are eager to come near unto him, even unto his seat, and there to order all our cause before him; if we delight in the light of his countenance, and long for the joys of his salvation; if we would wish to appropriate to ourselves the treasures of redeeming mercy, and clear up our own interest in the blessings of the great salvation—then these meetings are important and invaluable.

In them God permits us to draw near unto himself, and to fill our mouth with arguments; he allows us to pour out our hearts freely in his presence, and makes all his goodness pass before us. There he lays open all his treasures, and invites us to partake of all his rich and inexhaustible provisions. His resources are immense; but the whole are unfolded for our benefit, and laid open to our enjoyment and use. Here we may, in succession, take up every promise of his word, and every engagement of his faithfulness and love; plead these in our prayers, and lodge them before his throne. All things are ours. He says, "Ask, and ye shall receive. If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

How often, in these societies, has the God of all grace drawn near to the members in the kindness of his love; and, in the fulness of his saving power, spoken peace to their spirits, and sealed the tokens of his favour on their hearts! How often has the garment of mortality hung lightly around them; and their faith, entering into that which is within the veil, brought them near to the general assembly and church of the first-born! They have stood on the verge of heaven, and enjoyed fellowship with the spirits of the just! They have found it good to be there! Their fellowship has been with the Father and the Son! They have seen the King in his beauty, and possessed some anticipation of the felicity and rapture of glorified immortals!

Now, if the substance be better than the shadow; if the reality be superior to the mere semblance and representation; if it be better to be encompassed with the riches of grace, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, than amused with the mere symbols of piety, while in fact we were left in the darkness of ignorance, and in all the starvation and wretchedness of a carnal and unconverted condition; then who can tell the grandeur of the worth of these associations, where the soul is carried beyond the stiffness and formality of mere external

worship, into the very heart and substance of genuine devotion!

When we are labouring under the languor and frigidity of our cold and dull observances, we often think that it would be well worth while to die, to get a sight of the services of heaven, and witness the warmth, elevation, and ardour of the inhabitants of heaven! They have no wanderings in their minds, nor any coldness in their affections. Their whole heart and soul are thrown into their work. They do some justice to the generosity and grace of Jesus, and give him some of the glory due unto his name!

Hark! how the adoring hosts above, &c.

Now, in these meetings, the first emotions of heaven have been felt; and there the faithful have gathered around them those principles and enjoyments which they have carried into the world of bliss, and will retain through eternity.

If we have proper views of religion, we will prefer a few moments of the divine presence, to months and years of mere lifeless and formal service. We would rather possess the blessings promised in the Psalms, than have enjoyed the honour of writing them; we would rather obtain nearness to God, than occupy a throne. During the effusion of the Holy Spirit in North America, there is more crowding to prayer-meetings than to sermons.

When we are meeting with God, we cannot leave off.

"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Would you like, when the brief journey of life is closed, to enter into rest—to see God? to behold his glory, and be for ever filled and satisfied with his likeness? Come then, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut the doors about you! Here the cares and toils, the noise and clamour of a distracted and contentious world, are excluded. Here you enjoy days of heaven, and seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. For a time things seen and perishing are forgotten. The grand and overpowering realities of eternity are seen and felt. The Lord is in the midst of you! Is it not written, "Then they that feared the Lord, spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it? By beholding his matchless loveliness and infinite excellencies, your souls are charmed with his glories, and rivetted to his service. You exclaim, how great is his love, how unsearchable his goodness. You retire from the meeting transported with his kindness; and, oh! how enlarged and elevated are you in the duties of the family, and in the exercises of the closet!

When one who holds communion with the skies—
Has fill'd his urn where the pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us, meaner things;
'Tis even as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
And tells us where his treasure is supplied—

You go through the duties of life with the gentleness and dignity of the citizens of Zion.

How come some men to live and converse more like angels than men? They are often in these meetings.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN BONAR, Larbert.

SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN BROWN PATTERSON, FALKIRK,

By the Rev. JOHN BONAR,
Minister of the Parish of Larbert and Dunipace.

"*Be still, and know that I am God.*"—PSALM xlvi. 10.

WHEN the disciples, in a night of darkness and storm, were tossed with tempests and ready to perish, the Lord Jesus arose from his resting-place, and said to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still." The waters heard and obeyed the voice of their God;—"instantly there was a calm." May these words of our God, whose voice is upon the waters, "who stilleth the noise of the waves and the tumults of the people," be as quick and powerful this day in our hearts, to subdue them to the obedience of the faith, to calm every rising opposition to his most holy will, and to cause "the peace of God to keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

The command here given, and the similitude under which it is conveyed, imply a previous and very different state—a state of commotion and trouble; a day of dimness, darkness, and dismay; a time of sorrows multiplied, till like mighty billows, they are ready to overwhelm the soul.

But, over all this scene of terror and dismay, over all these rising billows, the voice of God cometh forth as the voice of the Eternal, "Be still, and know that I am God;" and this voice heard, understood, and obeyed, like the command, "Let there be light" uttered over the chaos of a dark world, brings light, and life, and peace, to the troubled soul.

I. Let us consider, in the first place, then, what is implied in the stillness which we are here called to. And,

1st. It implies *the restraint of all tumultuous passions, and silent submission to the will of God.*

The impulse of nature, in seasons of sore affliction, is to vent itself in complaints, and tears, and lamentations; and it were well if our sorrows carried us no farther than this, and that even when these outward expressions are restrained, there were not deeper and darker feelings generated within; but it is much to be feared that many give way to the temptation of Job, when his grief was very great, and inwardly accuse God, and rise against him. When exposed to such seasons of afflictions, those who know not God are apt to indulge in the most unworthy thoughts of him—impute harshness and severity to his government, repine at the appointments of his wisdom, and fret as if they had received what they did not deserve, and even those "who know God," who "acknowledge him in all their ways," who do trust in him, and know that he will bring to pass what concerns their salvation, are too often moved from this

their confidence, by sore affliction. The cloud that rests on them darkens their views even of God; and, amid many expressions of resignation, doubts of the divine providence and love, murmurings, discontent, and rebellion, will often be found lurking within.

Now, the first and most obvious thing to which we are here called, is the restraint and subjugation of all such unworthy thoughts and tumultuous feelings: "Be still;"—put down these sinful repinings—these proud risings of soul. "Be still."—Remember what thou art, and no more dispute God's right to do with thee as seemeth good to him. "Be still."—If thou canst not eradicate, at least seek to subdue, to restrain, and to curb so offensive and sinful a resistance to God.

To some this degree of submission may appear to be easy. Such have the evidence in this very thought that they know only, if they have known at all, the "beginning of sorrows." When favoured with health, friends, and prosperity—with domestic comfort and cheerful days, there is no great difficulty in speaking and thinking well of the ways of God; but when tribulation abounds, and sorrows are multiplied; when streams of earthly comfort are not only dried up, but pour forth waters of bitterness; when disease and death spoil us of our best earthly treasures, and the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke; when every thing around us is clad in darkness, and every prospect covered with dismay; when God thus lets loose his winds upon us, and all his billows go over us—then, to look upin silent submission, and "to be still," "because the Lord hath done it," this is, indeed, a very blessed, but very difficult attainment.

But, difficult as it is, still, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, it has been attained, and that even by men "of like passions with ourselves." Very dreadful was the trial of Aaron, when his sons, the Lord's priests, were consumed for offering strange fire on the Lord's altar; and yet it is written "for our learning," "Aaron held his peace," because the Lord did it. Very sharp and afflicting was the trial of Abraham when he prayed, with all the anxiety of a tender parent, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" but received only for answer, "*In Isaac will I establish my covenant.*" And yet he disputed not with God; but then, as before, stayed his mind on this: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Still more awful was the trial of Eli, when the Lord said to him, for the iniquity of his sons, and his neglect of them, "I will cut off thine own arm, and the arm of thy father's house, and there shall not be an old man in thy house for ever; and he that is left in thy house shall be to consume thine eyes and to grieve thy heart;" yet he answered, "It is the Lord." But a greater than patriarch or prophet is in this path of silent submission: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter," says the Scriptures, "and, as a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." "Is there any sorrow like unto his sorrow?" who himself "carried our sorrows?" How willing, then, ought we to be not only to suffer as he suffered, but anxious to walk amid our sufferings as he walked, and to be enabled to say with his servant, amid the severest trials that can befall us, "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it."

2d. But the stillness here spoken of implies something more than restraint and silence. It implies *humble acquiescence, childlike submission, and consequent calmness.*

At the root of all our murmuring, and all the proud risings of our souls against God in seasons of affliction, lies either unbelief or profanity. Either we do not believe that God "hath done it," or do not believe in the wisdom and the love with which he hath done it; and hence there often lurks in the mind, even amid much seeming submission, a desire that it had been otherwise than God hath chosen it to be—a wish that we had what God has been pleased to deny us—a wish to retain what he has seen meet to take away. Now it is when this feeling is discovered, abjured, and cast out by much prayer, (for otherwise it goes not out at all,) —when we are enabled from the heart to justify God and God's ways, even in the most crushing strokes of his righteous providence,—when we are made to feel that all is infinitely less than he might have justly called us to endure, and to prize the unmerited mercies which he has mingled with our cup of sorrow, it is then that we reach in some degree the temper and disposition to which we are here called.

This acquiescence, however, is very different from that stupid indifference or stoical apathy which some have affected in seasons of affliction. Those who do not

feel the losses with which they are visited, who are so gross and selfish that nothing affects them but what comes in the shape of bodily privation or bodily pain, are incapable of the high and holy resignation we now speak of. Where there is no storm, there can be no calming of the troubled elements; where there is no tumult, there can be no stilling of violent passions, by high thoughts of God, and duty and eternity; where there is no emotion, there can be no trial, no victory over the weakness of nature by the power of grace; and the very supposition therefore, of such acquiescence and submission, far from implying any such stupid apathy, supposes a struggle, a severe and painful struggle, between the weakness of nature and perversity of sin, and the principles and hopes of the Gospel, by which they are to be overcome and subdued. Nay, this temper is not only very different from such stoical apathy, but is also very different from that forced and lingering acquiescence by which we part with what we can no longer hold, and try to get over what we cannot prevent. It is, indeed, to part with what we can no longer hold, but it is to do so "not by constraint, but willingly." It is to feel that what has befallen us, is the will of God; that, being *his* will, it is, and must be, infinitely best for us, however dark, discouraging, and perplexing, it may at the time appear. It is to look back on comforts and blessings felt, relished, and rejoiced in, all departed, and with the keenest sense of their value to say over their departure, 'The will of God be done." It is to look around on once happy scenes written all blankness and desolation, so far as earth and time extend, and yet to say, "Shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and not evil also?" It is to look forward to a changed world, and to that way which lies before us, now so lonely, dark, and difficult, and to say, as David did when he went up by the ascent of mount Olivet barefooted, and escaping for his life from the holy city, his heart more wrung by the treachery of Absalom than by his own destitute condition: "Carry back the ark of God to the city. If I shall find favour in the sight of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his holy habitation; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here I am; let him do to me as seemeth good to him."

Happy is the man who gains such an ascendency over these troubled and tempestuous feelings which sudden or desolating afflictions cause to rush over the soul; who can, and does thus vindicate the ways of God to himself, even when "heart and flesh" is ready to "faint and fail;" who thus cleaves to him, saying, "Though he slay me," and every earthly comfort, "yet will I trust in Him;" and who, amid a darkness and desolation that is often ready to overwhelm, arises and goes about his father's business with increased disentanglement and alacrity. "It is, indeed, good that a man should both thus hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

3d. But, finally, the text calls us not only to such humble acquiescence and submission, but even *to joyful tranquillity in the midst of tribulation.*

When the troubled waters are stilled, they not only move along quietly, or sleep softly in their bed, but the image of the placid heavens is again reflected from their bosom; they again sweetly water and refresh the banks they struck so rudely with their waves; the vessels which were tossed with tempest are borne quietly along to their desired haven;—so the soul that is in the full meaning of the word *stilled* and *subdued*, arrives at a blessed calmness of spirit—a holy tranquillity—a joyful composure.—Its tribulation worketh patience; and "patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart." "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace," says the blessed Word, "whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Wherefore he hath said, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your minds through Jesus Christ"—keep or garrison the soul; garrison it against all enemies; confirm it against all attacks;—secure it against all opposition. Some degree of this peace all they have, who, even while "they walk in darkness," stay themselves on God; and many reach it to a very happy and blessed extent. Thus Job, in the darkest night of his adversity, was yet enabled to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He would bless him both in giving and taking away, satisfied that *his* taking away was a blessing, as well as his giving; and that, if he could only see it, there was as much wisdom in the one as in the other. Thus also David says,

"I will praise and bless the Lord while I have any being." But Jesus, "who was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin," hath left us a still brighter example of this high and blessed attainment; who, contemplating the most inscrutable and unsearchable of all God's ways to men, rejoiced in them, as manifestations of that will which is always holy, wise and good. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." And multitudes even of the feeblest of his followers have, by his supporting grace, been enabled to pass through the most "fiery trials," saying, "We dwell under the shadow of the Almighty; he is a very present help in times of trouble; therefore we will not be afraid though the waters roar and be troubled; though the mountains" of our firm confidence "be removed, and cast into the sea: yea, though the fig-tree doth not blossom, and the labour of the olive fail; though all wonted comforts cease, and all creature joys be dried up, yet will we joy in God"—the God of our salvation.

But while this blessed security and holy joy is thus attainable even in the midst of tribulation, it is more frequently the fruit and consequence of rightly improved affliction than its present attendant. It is the peaceable "fruit of righteousness which is wrought out in those who are rightly exercised by those afflictions which are not, and cannot, be at the present joyous but grievous." But it is a fruit which even the deepest of these sorrows have a direct tendency to produce in such souls; for whence comes our unhappiness, our darkness, our doubt, but from opposing God, preferring our own wills, wishing things to be as we would have them, rather than as *He* would have them? Now, such great and heavy strokes at once remind us of our own weakness, and cast us upon God alone for comfort; lead us to know that his ways are not as our ways, and thus tend to lead us to resign and commit ourselves, and all we have, to him who knows infinitely best what is good for us, and "can make all things work together" to accomplish that end.

Happy is the soul that, by its sorrows however multiplied, however wounding to flesh and blood, is thus weaned from every creature confidence, drawn to God with full and entire dependence, and, by every storm that darkens and infests this lower world, brought to fix its "chiefest joy" where these storms can never reach, and to say with a surer and firmer voice, "O God, thou art my God; whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth whom I desire in comparison with thee."

Such is the silent submission, humble acquiescence, and peaceful composure to which we are here called. And when God calls us to these, he adds sure and sufficient ground for their exercise, the highest and most glorious reason for their cultivation: "Be still, and know that I am God." I am God, therefore be thou still.

II. What, then, is the force of this reason? This is the second thing into which we are to inquire. And,

1st. He who afflicts is *God supreme*, the *sovereign Ruler of the universe.* I am God: "I create the light and the darkness;" "I wound and I heal;" "I kill and I keep alive, saith the Lord." Therefore let "all flesh keep silence when God riseth" up; when he "cometh out of his place, even though it be for judgment, which is his strange work."

But there is more in the consideration of God's supreme power and sovereign authority to calm our minds than this. "Our God is in the heaven, and hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." "None can stay his hand, or say, What dost thou?" What presumption, then, in "creatures of the dust," in "children of a day," in "sinful dust and ashes," who are "of yesterday, and know nothing," to question his doings; to sit in judgment on his ways; to lift themselves up against him in repinings, or murmurs, or dislike? What would an angel or glorified spirit from that world where all do his pleasure, where God is all and in all, and where the gathered myriads of heavenly hosts—angel, archangel, cherubim, and seraphim—draw their being and their bliss from the light of his countenance? What would an inhabitant of such a world think of that murmuring and disputing against God with which we are chargeable? How foolish and how offensive in the sight of such a one would be, even many of those regrets and sorrows which we think it right to indulge in! How much more offensive, then, must all such thoughts be in the sight of Him in whose sight the "heavens are not clean!"

Thus, in the sovereign and universal dominion of the Lord, do we find the most certain reason for unqualified, unquestion-

ing, unreserved submission to his holy will. What time our souls are ready to be overwhelmed within us, it is our best resource to rise above all earthly things to the contemplation of Him who is the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Jehovah, and to meet every rising wave with the soul-subduing thought of his supreme and universal dominion. When once the mind is filled with these meditations of God, other things are reduced to their proper place, and the soul is stilled amid all the confusion and disorder of earthly things.

2d. He who afflicts is the *God of infinite wisdom.* However sovereign toward us are all his acts, in themselves they are all acts of infinite wisdom. He may, and often does, walk in a mysterious way. He plants his footsteps in the sea ; " his path is in the waters," and we see " but a small part of his ways ;" but still "justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne," and the character of all his doings. Well, therefore, does it become us to commit every thing into his hand ; to trust all to his unerring wisdom ; to adore when we cannot fathom ; and to say, amid all the darkness, disappointments, and decay of earthly things, and all the sorrows and desolation which these may bring to us, " Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints ; who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy ?"

And the comfort which arises from such thoughts is not confined to any one species of trouble or affliction. It is equally applicable to all that can darken, distress, or disturb us. As soon as the will of God is manifested ; as soon as any thing has become part of "the doings of the Lord" to us, we are warranted to flee to this strong rock for our consolation and support. It is *his will*, therefore it is infinitely wise and infinitely good ; nay, it is "according to the council of his will"—part of the great design which he is carrying forward by all his creatures and all their actions ; and being so, however dark to us, however inexplicable, it surely becomes us " to hope, and quietly to wait to see what God will do."

Our own case, whatever it may be, can be no exception to these general principles. *It* too is part of the ways of God, for " he numbereth the hairs of our head." It is *a* part in which he takes an especial interest, for " even a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his knowledge ;" and he hath taught us to say, "He who clotheth the lilies, and feedeth the ravens when they cry, how much more will he care for you, O ye of little faith." It is, therefore, a *part* of these ways which are all guided by infinite wisdom and unerring rectitude. Dark it may, indeed, appear to us ; desolate and afflicted it may leave us ; but the longer we contemplate it, and the more we view it as the work of God, the more will we discover of light and love in its darkest shades. Now, indeed, we are often in perplexity, and after all our ponderings, all our prayers, all our thoughts, have only to stand amazed, and wondering " what the end of those things which the Lord hath done shall be ;" and even after much light has been thrown on them, and great purposes have been discovered to be answered by them, we must still, in a great majority of cases, just take our stand with the humble in every age by a sea which we cannot fathom, saying, " O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ; how unsearchable are his ways and his judgments past our finding out !" But though he giveth not an account of his matters ; though he wills that we should " live by faith, and not by sight," even with regard to the purposes of his providence ; though he chooses that we should rely on his arm, simply because it is his, not knowing whither he leads us ; yet have we the promise of Christ, that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. The wheels of providence are intricate and involved, and often lifted up far above out of our sight ; but when we too are lifted up, when the promised hereafter comes, then shall we " know even as we are known ;" then shall we " no more see through a glass darkly," but then shall we both see and acknowledge, that towards all his people in all his ways our God hath abounded not only in grace, but " in all wisdom ;" and that, by every step however painful, hath he led us " by a right way to a city that hath foundations."

Such, then, being the nature of the divine government, such the unerring wisdom of our God, how unworthy is it in us to desire that any one step should be left out of our way ; that any appointment should be either in kind or degree different from what seemeth meet to him, or that any one ingredient should be left out in the bitterest draught which he sees needful to administer ! How wise and becoming rather to seek to copy

the perfect example of suffering which Christ hath left us, and to say of all, "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? not my will, but thine be done!"

3d. But I hasten to observe, that "*God is love*," and that here we have a new and higher motive still for submission and resignation: "Be still, and know that I am God," even a God of love. Yes, "God is love," and all the afflictions which are ready to overwhelm us;—all the darkness which covers our path, are under the guidance, and at the disposal, of infinite love. Even in the darkest times, his people are encouraged to draw near to him, and to look to him under this calming and solacing aspect. He is well pleased with them for Christ's sake, and in him may they constantly draw near to God as their reconciled God and Father. And here, indeed, is a source of never-failing comfort, joy, and hope, amid all their afflictions. Being a God of love, "he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men;" he taketh no pleasure in seeing poor creatures tossed with tempests and with fears; but perceiving us to be in a path of danger, and knowing the value of our souls, "he afflicts for our profit, that we may become partakers of his holiness." If we would forget him, put the world in his place, and choose our own will, this were to gather to ourselves all that would most certainly ruin us for ever. Surely, then, it is mercy and love in him to take away whatever we so abuse, and so shut us up anew to seek our chief happiness where only it can be found; and surely such mercy and love should be met with unqualified submission and sincere gratitude. "We have had parents in the flesh who corrected us," and we both honoured them and believed their kindness; "how much more should we be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live!" They often, with minglings of human frailty—with partial wisdom chastened us; but He, "for our profit," with unerring wisdom, appoints every rod, and measures every stroke. Surely, then, it is meet that so kind and gracious a Father should hear us saying, "I have borne chastisements; I will not offend any more, even by one doubt or one murmur against God."

Nay, more, such chastisement is a special proof of love. Did he leave us "without it," he would leave us without that "whereof all his children," one way or another, "are partakers." For whom he loveth, "he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son he receiveth." It is a Father's love, indeed, which follows a wayward child; which refuses to part with him, or leave him to wander; which bears with all his resistance and folly; which hedges up his way, and forsakes him not till restored to the fold, and gladly and joyfully saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd; before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I am returned to the shepherd and bishop of my soul."

The language of affliction, then, is very different from what it is generally supposed and felt to be. It is the language of the purest love, the most anxious concern, the tenderest care. It is as if God said, There is a dear child wandering; if he walk in that path, it will prove his ruin. There he is taking and receiving the things which unfit him for the place I have called him to—injuring his prospects for eternity,—losing his crown, and yet he is blind. All my kindness he rather abuses; all my forbearances rather encourage him. I cannot let him thus perish; if he will not be drawn to me, he must be driven; if he will not come, he must be brought. Go, then, sore disease, sudden loss, awful bereavement, and take from that dear child what keeps him from his chiefest good; and make him know, that even when I afflict, it is in very faithfulness and in very love. And even when we can trace no such immediate happy effects;—when our afflictions cut down our best spiritual comforts, as well as our most prized temporal blessings;—when they deprive us not only of much earthly delight, but of much spiritual refreshment, still we are to cleave to this, that in infinite love they are sent. Whence come they? Do they not all come from Him "who spared not his own Son, but freely gave him for us all?" If, then, he hath indeed given his Son for us; if he so loved us, that when no other sacrifice could do, *this* was not spared, how certainly may we advance to the blessed conclusion, "How shall he not with him freely give us all things?" And if with him he freely give us all things needful for eternity, or glorious in it, how surely will he not take away any thing that could be spared in consistency with his glory and our ultimate good. Surely, then, it is a wretched thing for those who rejoice in the hope of God's mercy unto eternal life, to doubt of his love in the afflictions of this life. Such doubts are most dishonourable to God; and, there-

fore, our daily prayer should be, that we may so know him, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, so as not only in patience, but in peace, to possess our souls at all times.

Such, then, are the high and sufficient grounds here given us in this one word for quietness and submission, for composure, and solemn joy, in seasons of affliction. God our God is the sovereign Ruler of the universe :—Let us mark his doings, observe his goings forth, and receive his appointments in silent submission. He is a God of infinite wisdom, of unerring rectitude :—Let us acquiesce in all his dispensations as infinitely the best :—He is love. Let us compose our souls into that blessed tranquillity which arises from trusting in him.

Know, then, that this is the God who ruleth over all, and "Be still;" know it, ye that are far from God, and who may never yet have felt the need of his consolations. You may think the day of sorrow far off; but "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." And when these troubles shall roll on to you, where is your hope? In such seasons the believer himself, with all his hopes and confidence in God, is ready to be overwhelmed. Where, then, shall you appear? where get what may stay and comfort your heart, and keep you from choosing iniquity rather than affliction? Unhappy, unhappy beyond what words can express, are those who in the hour of nature's weakness, and this world's desolation, know not what it is to go to God. They have no rock or fortress to which to flee; no anchor, sure and steadfast by which they might hang till the storm be overpast. The very thoughts of God, which to those who know him are full of support, are their terror and dismay. "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked" at any time; but visibly and emphatically so in seasons of affliction, "the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, casting up mire and dirt." Know, then, the Lord in this "the day of your merciful visitation." Give glory to God before your feet stumble upon the dark mountain, and, while you look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. "Seek him while he is to be found," that when the days of darkness come you may have a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest. And let all who know the Lord, who rejoice in his power, wisdom, and love, as their true support in time of sorrow, realize the presence of the Saviour with them wherever they are. He walks forth amid all the storms and tempests which roll over this world, saying continually to those that are his, "Fear not, it is I: Be still, and know that I am God." Open the eye of faith, and see him ever present. Lift up the ear of faith and catch those glad accents which come forth over all the floods of great waters which can overflow the soul. "Hear, and your souls shall live." "Believe, and enter into rest."

Such are the grounds on which we are called to stay ourselves on God amid the darkest dispensations; and such I feel are the only sufficient grounds on which I can expect you to attain to calmness, acquiescence, and submission, in reference to that event which now fills every mind.

And never, indeed, did any stand more in need of the support and consolation which these words convey than we do at this time. When the useless are taken away, we may mourn for their own sake, but we cannot mourn for the sake of the world. When the aged are called to lay aside their earthly tabernacle, we feel that it is meet that "the shock fully ripe" should be gathered into the garner; but when youth and health, the full tide of life, and the yet but opening career of usefulness are suddenly arrested; when the hopes of future years and the expectations of future usefulness come to an end in a moment; when the brightest promise of much fruit is crushed down and buried where it budded fairest,—the mind is unhinged; and it is not till we can think of God in the wisdom of his providence, and in the riches of his grace, that we are able to calm our troubled and tumultuous thoughts.

And all this is peculiarly found in the event which we lament, and now seek to improve. Your beloved pastor was in the midst of his days, and in the midst of his usefulness. His bright and blessed career was but opening upon him. Health and strength seemed to promise long life, and growing devotedness brought the assurance that that life would be one of unwearied usefulness. When "in an hour when we thought not," the hand of death was permitted to lay his cold arrest on him, and on all the hopes which centred in him. Most needful for us, then, at this time is it to recall the all-wise government and infinite love of the blessed God, and to stay ourselves on him. We know that that life is long enough in which the great purpose of

living has been accomplished, the soul saved, and eternity prepared for; we know that there is a way of living long in short time; we know that the life of *him*, whose life was "the light of the world," was but thirty-three years, and the most active part of that life only three; we know, and rejoice to know, that he whom we mourn was his disciple, and sought to walk even as he walked; but, with all this, it is not till we return and contemplate this "as the doing" of the Supreme, the purpose of the all-wise God, that we can know the full ground we have for submission, and acquiescence, and settled peace.

But while we thus seek, by such considerations, to still our minds, so as that, while "chastened," they may be sanctified, while driven from man, they may be drawn to God, one great purpose, for which we ought to employ the calm thus obtained, is, a right remembrance of him whom we mourn, and a right improvement of the privileges we enjoyed under him.

When we see a river whose streams make glad many lands, we eagerly follow its course, and trace its first flowings with great delight; so when God has been pleased to open a river whose streams have gladdened many souls, and comforted many hearts, we have an eager desire to discover its first rising, and to mark its gradual enlargement as fed by many tributary streams it rolls on in its course. Of the early life, however, of your departed pastor, I know comparatively little; but I do know that there was, even then, such early symptoms of superior excellence, as awakened the joy of parents, the prayers of pious friends, the delight of instructors, and the love of all. As he advanced, and his mind began to be formed, there appeared such aptness to learn, such readiness of mind, such patient assiduity, and such unexampled success, as gave promise of the very highest eminence. No pains were spared in cultivating a mind so fitted to receive all cultivation; and the result was, as you all know, one of the most accomplished scholars, one of the best informed men, and one of the most splendid writers which the country could rejoice in. And even then there was united with this superiority, an amiability of mind, and a meekness of character, which drew the hearts of all to him. His superiority awakened no feeling among his companions but admiration, and that admiration had no bitterness nor envy in it. His success was felt to be a common honour in which all shared; and when crowned with the highest academical distinctions, and drawing the plaudits of admiring thousands, every one seemed to rejoice in these honours as if partly his own.

"But what things were gain" to him in these respects, "these he had by the grace of God "learned to count loss" in comparison with the "excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus." Yea, to "count all things but loss to win Christ," "to be found in him," and to make him known to others.

Under these impressions, he entered on studies more immediately preparatory to the work of the ministry. There, as in every other department he excelled, and came forth largely and liberally acquainted with the science of theology, and still more deeply impressed with the glory and importance of its truths. Having received license to preach from the Presbytery of Edinburgh, he entered on the work of the ministry with delight. His preaching even in these days did not disappoint the hopes and expectations of his friends, high as these were. He was hailed as a joyful accession to the talents and piety of the Church, and very soon called to the pastoral charge of this large and important parish.

This event seems to have awakened all the energies and all the responsibilities of his mind, to have confirmed every principle of religion in it, and to have called forth a more unreserved devotedness of himself, "soul, body, and spirit," to the work of the ministry. You cannot have forgot under what a solemn feeling of responsibility he addressed you on the first day, when, as your pastor he spoke to you from this place, which now must "know him no more;" and yourselves are witnesses with how much fidelity, and earnestness, and assiduity, he was enabled to "discharge the ministry he had received," and to fulfil the office, the weight of which he felt so much. Need I speak to you of his preaching? his high and lofty words yet sound in your ears; his deep and spirit-moving sentiments still re-echo in your bosom. He was indeed "an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures," a "scribe well instructed unto the kingdom, who brought forth out of his treasures things new and old." Deeply versed in the sacred scriptures, and in all that may help to a right understanding of them, personally feeding on the glorious truths they reveal, and it was his joy and delight to

expound these scriptures "that the word of Christ might dwell in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Feeling the benefit of a connected view of divine truth, it was his desire, and one which, through the blessing of God, he lived to accomplish, to carry you through a connected view of all that God hath made known for our salvation and sanctification;—our guidance in life, our hope in death, and our happiness in eternity. On all the subjects which thus came under review in his daily course of lecturing and preaching, he was powerful and eloquent, but it was when expatiating on the wonders of creation, on the glories of redemption, or the unseen realities of the world to come, that his mind rose to its highest and most joyful exercise, and poured itself forth in such a tide of magniloquent language and full-orbed expressions, as brought the whole before you with surpassing and delightful power. He never seemed at any loss to find the most appropriate words to embody even the highest imaginings of his gifted mind. He was indeed the greatest master of language I ever heard, and compelled words to express meanings and shades of meaning, with a fidelity and fulness all his own. His style was highly classical, and what was much more refreshing to the christian mind, highly scriptural. Deeply imbued with the language and spirit of the scriptures, which, like Timothy, "he had known from a youth," a delightful vein of scripture expression ran through all his discourses. Intimately acquainted with the original languages, even when his expressions seemed to go further than our mind had been accustomed to be carried by the words employed, a more minute examination soon showed that it was not further than the words of the original did fully warrant. And deeply impressed with the realities of man's condition as a sinful, dying, yet immortal creature, all this power of expression was employed only on the most important and most useful subjects;—the relation of man to God, the glory of Christ, the way of salvation, the feelings of a renewed mind, the great realities of death, judgment, and eternity, were the constant chosen themes of all his preaching. He knew that the Gospel reveals a way of salvation essentially distinct from all other systems. He felt that as ever he would be saved himself, or would save others, it became him to know and declare that way. He felt that it was infinitely dangerous to rest in any thing, either different from, or short of the truth, as it is in Jesus; and therefore it was, that in all his preaching and in all his exertions, he resolved to know nothing and to make nothing known in comparison with Christ and him crucified—the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

But much research as he gave himself to, finished in a high degree as were his discourses, enlarged in thought, and lofty and elegant in expression as they continued to be from sabbath to sabbath, he did not confine his ministrations to the pulpit. "He taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." He attended with assiduous diligence the sick and the dying; he freely entered every dwelling where he might be permitted to speak for his master and set forth the Saviour; he carried with him a feeling heart for every suffering, and a ready hand for every relief; and with all, and above all, he sought "by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience."

Nor did he confine his ministrations in your behalf, even to these more stated labours of the ministry. He regularly expounded a passage of scripture during the interval of public worship, and he had a monthly lecture on the sabbath evening, and a monthly prayer meeting on a week-day evening. By the first, he sought to turn to good account a portion of time, too often spent, even by those of whom better things might have been expected, in idle conversation. By the second, he hoped to have an opportunity of preaching the Gospel more widely and generally than he could do at the regular hours of worship. And by the last, he sought to unite the hearts of those who loved the truth in fervent prayer, for a divine blessing on the work of God among themselves, and on the labours of God's servants throughout the world. And none who attended these happy meetings, will ever, I think, forget their happy effect, and the unity, the love, the peace, which his instructions, but more especially his prayers, on such occasions were calculated to inspire. Besides all this, he took the deepest interest in the spiritual condition of those who came to him for instruction; most anxiously sought to prepare the young and others for a right and profitable approach to the communion table; and in furtherance of this object, opened a class for the instruction of young

people, which met weekly, and in the exercises of which he took great and growing delight.

Such was your beloved pastor in the public duties of that office, which he rejoiced to magnify. If I should attempt to gather up the great leading features of his character, I would mention, first of all, his *personal piety* and *deep feeling of ministerial responsibility*. Feeling the importance of his own soul's salvation, he felt the importance of salvation to all over whom God had appointed him to watch. Daily cultivating habits of piety, he sought to form others to the same. Feeling that there is a great gulf betwixt all outward reformation, and that "regeneration without which no man can see the kingdom of God;" he could not be satisfied with any thing short of this, and felt that he laboured in vain "till Christ was formed in those he sought to save, the hope of glory." The small success of his labours in this respect;—the slight impression which divine truth produced;—the many who yet remained dead, careless, and worldly;—the many who satisfied themselves with a form of godliness while they were strangers to its power, lay heavy on his mind. The very last time I ever saw him, he spoke of it with the greatest solemnity, regretted with deep humility that he had done so little; and added, if God should spare his life, he hoped to abound more in the work of the Lord than he had ever done, and to set himself more firmly than ever to all that might advance the purity of the church committed to his care. "Five years," he said, "and how little done?" Ah! brethren, where lay the obstruction?—where lay the hinderance to the entrance of the truth?—where shall come the condemnation? Is it not a very solemn thing indeed to have had five years of such a ministry, five years of such preaching, such prayers, such anxious care, and all without any saving effect? Is it not alarming insensibility indeed, to be this day as little impressed as if a prophet of the Lord had not been among you?

But I am attempting to gather the leading features of his character, and must now speak of those *powers of mind* which his personal piety directed and employed. His understanding was vigorous and comprehensive. His judgment was calm and solid to an extent rarely combined with such powers of memory as he possessed. His memory was of the most retentive kind, and almost equally so of events, places, circumstances, and words. His imagination was of the happiest and most splendid order, clothing all his thoughts with the most appropriate expressions, and finding for them the most felicitous illustrations. And yet with all this, there was a sagacity, a power of foreseeing consequences and anticipating events, and consequently of counselling in difficult cases, which was perhaps one of the most characteristic features of his mind, as it is one of the rarest to be met with in minds constituted like his.

But though thus so highly gifted with natural powers, *diligence and assiduity* were leading features of his character. He was employed from morning to night, either adding to his stores of knowledge or applying them to the work of the Lord. He did not serve you, or dare to bring to this place what cost him nothing. He prepared from week to week with as much assiduity as if the work had been new to him, and his obvious anxiety was "to be a man of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." His soul was in his work, and what was truly wonderful, was equally so in the work of visiting from house to house, as in the work of preaching; in the routine of business, when necessary, as in the most profound studies. In this way he was able to undertake and to accomplish an amount of labour which to ordinary minds and ordinary diligence was almost incredible.

Finally, with all these varied powers there *was a meekness, a humility, a mildness, and a simplicity about him*, which drew the hearts of all to him. Pride, vain-glory, withdrawment from early friends and simple joys, though too frequent consequences of literary eminence and the adulation of the world, he was more entirely free from than any one I ever knew. He was eminently distinguished by the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." Deep feelings he had, quickly responsive to kindness, and equally so therefore to the reverse; but the passions which these feelings too often awaken when injured, and the wrath, bitterness, and strife which they engender, he had been enabled to restrain. As a christian minister he exemplified, in a more than ordinary degree, the "meekness and gentleness of Christ." In the outward bearing of his life he was peculiarly conformed to the image of his Master,—harmless in his conduct, undefiled in his conversation, innocent in his pleasures, and separated from the world

that lieth in wickedness, in all his enjoyments.

He was a man of peace, "seeking peace and pursuing it," abhorring "all wrath and bitterness and strife," and although firm in maintaining what he felt to be truth, yet regretting in his inmost soul all that separated brethren and divided "the body of Christ." In a word, when we think of his character and conduct, of the esteem, and love, and confidence, with which his brethren, and even his fathers in the church regarded him;—of the growing devotedness of his life, and advancing likeness to his blessed Master, we are reminded of what the Apostle said of some of his fellow-labourers:—"If any inquire after our brethren, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ."

Such, and much more, was your dear pastor and my beloved friend, and such as he was by nature and by grace, yea, all that he was, all that he had, was yours. *This* place, *this* parish, *this* people, *this* house of the Lord, he loved with an intensity which nothing could change. "Ye were in his heart to live and to die with you." His joy was "to spend and be spent" in your service. His motto was, "holding forth the word of life that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." And though he had known, what there is too much reason to think, that his labour, anxiety, and activity, tended to shorten his days, I am persuaded, that if it had been needful, he could have said, "Yea, and I, if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

On these things we delight to dwell; but the dark affecting truth ever returns, he is gone, and we shall see him no more! Yes, he is gone, and you have lost a faithful and affectionate pastor; his relations, a most attached husband, son, and brother; his friends, one of the most beloved of their circle, which year after year narrows around them; the Church, one of her most enlightened sons; and the country, one of its brightest ornaments. He is gone, but not to the land of forgetfulness, as men ignorantly speak, but to Immanuel's happy land, "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to the spirits of the just made perfect," to be for ever with the Lord. And should we wish to have detained him? Should we regret *that* sickness and *that* death which ends in complete glorification? Should we selfishly mourn for those who have left this scene of labour for the land of rest? Shall we not mingle tears of joy with our tears of sorrow, and give thanks that he hath "kept the faith and finished his course;" that already he is partaker of the glory of which, even amid the wanderings of his fever he spoke of with joy and rapture; "and they that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

But, brethren, while we thus endeavour to raise our minds in gratitude to God, for all that he did in him, and by him, and for him, let us remember that our responsibility did not close with his life, and that "he being dead yet speaketh." Oh! then, hear that voice which comes to you now, with the sanction and solemnity of the tomb; ye that heard him so often with indifference or neglect, what his life could not do, let his death effect; what his eloquence could not reach, let the silence of the tomb accomplish. At last awake to feel the great reality of that which he ever urged on you, to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life; for know of a truth, that though you should never hear more of gospel offer or gospel truth, "much you have received, and much will be required of you." And ye who have received the knowledge of the truth by him, or been aided in your christian walk by his ministrations, oh! see that ye "fulfil his joy, and hold fast what he so earnestly delivered unto you." "Remember him who had the rule over you, who spoke unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of his conversation; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Yea, let one and all of you who loved him, "for the truth's sake which was in him," be led to prize more and more the "Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,"—to adore the love of God in permitting you to have it dispensed so long among you by his servant in such purity,—and to seek earnestly that he may send to this large, important, and deeply interesting place, one on whom "his mantle may fall," and who may have even a double portion of his spirit. We may fear, but we must not despond. There is "fulness in the Head out of which he can supply to those that remain all that is necessary for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The residue of the spirit is with him, and he hath said, "Ask and ye

shall receive." The Lord of the harvest will send forth labourers; "yet for this will He be inquired of by Israel." Pray ye then that He may send to the vineyard a "workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of life:" may give to this bereaved people a pastor according to his own heart, who "will feed the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood," who will carry forward the scheme so happily begun, and who will rejoice to be followers of him whom we mourn, even as he also was of Christ.

But I must hasten to a close. None can feel so much as I do, how little I have been able to set before you your revered pastor, or even to bring out the image I have of him deeply in my own breast. My consolation is, that from personal experience, and I trust, personal profit, "Ye know his doctrine, manner of life, faith, long suffering, charity, and patience. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly he behaved himself among you. Ye know how he exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, that ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory." And what shall I say more? Oh! cherish the remembrance of his faithful warnings; oh! seek that Saviour whom it was his delight to set forth as the only hope of your souls; oh! be yet "his crown and rejoicing in the day of the Lord;" oh! so walk as that when the purpose of God's providence is accomplished with you here, you may stand with him around the throne, and mingle in the joys of that land, where in bright vision he hath so often conducted you; where now he stands ready to receive you, and where there shall be no more sorrow, no more sighing, and no more death.

"Now then, unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever." Amen.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Sermon by the Rev. John Henderson, Carmunnock.
Sermon by the Rev. Andw M'Ewen, Glasgow.

MAN'S PARAMOUNT OBLIGATION TO EMBRACE AND DEFEND THE PURE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH, 31st MAY 1835, DURING THE SITTING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. JOHN HENDERSON,
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"*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*"—Jude 3.

Even under the professed acknowledgment of the fact, that a direct revelation has been vouchsafed from on high, the sentiment has often been advanced, and still more frequently practically acted upon, that man is not, and cannot be accountable for his religious belief, and that it matters not what are the opinions of the head, provided a due regard be paid to the regulation of the heart and the tenor of the life. Such a sentiment we view as not only unphilosophical in itself, but as obviously striking at the very root of the supreme authority of Scripture, affording, if true, a shelter and a hiding-place to the veriest sceptic in our land, and permitting the testimony of God to be mutilated and distorted, or cast away as a fable, without the shadow of criminality, or the least apprehension of danger.

We would make it, therefore, one object of this discourse to point out the erroneous nature of this opinion, and to illustrate the position that, enjoying as we do the light of the Gospel, we are accountable to God if we do not embrace in faith the pure doctrine which it teaches. We shall then offer some directions how we are to contend for the doctrines of the Gospel in the world around us. The first head of discourse may show the importance of cherishing "the faith once delivered to the saints" in our own souls; and the second may guide us in the important work of defending and promulgating that faith among our fellow-men. And may God of his infinite mercy bless the word that may be spoken; and, "fighting the good fight of faith here, may we at length receive the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, is to give at the great day."

We are in the first place to illustrate the position, that, enjoying as we do the light of the Gospel, we are accountable to God if we do not embrace in faith the pure doctrine which it teaches; and, in order to pave the way for the direct arguments we would advance upon this subject, it may be proper to advert at the outset to a common objection that has been offered against the point we would wish to establish. Faith, it is

said, is entirely an *intellectual exercise;* and, according to the constitution of the human mind, it must necessarily form a judgment for itself on the objects of evidence presented to it, over the alteration of which judgment, when these objects are perceived in the same light, the mind itself can have no control. Now that there is a necessary connexion between belief and the perception of evidence is abundantly clear. Against the abstract truth of this proposition, therefore, we have nothing to advance; but we certainly cannot consent to the sweeping application made of it to the question before us. Its aim on the present occasion (if it has any definite aim at all) must be to show, that when different minds are exercised upon the testimony of God, they must necessarily form judgments for themselves upon the doctrines which it contains, and reject, of course, altogether such doctrines as appear to any of them incapable of belief. Now, the truth of a proposition is one thing, and the application of that proposition is another; and we hesitate not to say, that, in the instance before us, the application is most unfortunate. For, in the first place, admitting that faith in its simplest form is entirely an intellectual exercise, it is, nevertheless, possible that the mind may not have sufficiently applied itself to the objects laid before it, so as to form any correct judgment at all; and, more especially, in reference to the testimony of God, that it may not have given to that testimony the regard and attention which, as a revelation from on high, it imperatively demands. If, under these circumstances, the pure testimony of God is not received, the error is not so much an *intellectual* as a *moral* one, arising from neglect and indifference, and plainly subjecting the individual to whom it attaches to the righteous condemnation of heaven. Secondly, still admitting that faith (that is, a simple speculative assent to truth) is entirely an intellectual exercise, still there are impediments to the reception of the divine testimony arising from the corruption of human nature, which tend to bias the mind, and lead it to refuse its assent to truths which it would otherwise receive, and *that* simply because human nature *cannot brook these truths.* For example, human nature *is proud.* Now pride operates in a variety of ways in leading many to reject the doctrines of the Gospel. One man, in the pride of his understanding, exults in the supremacy of reason, and will not assent to any doctrine that is beyond the grasp of his own finite comprehension. Upon this principle he rejects the doctrine of divine influence, the doctrine of the Trinity, or any other of the confessedly mysterious doctrines of the Bible. Another, or the same man, in the pride of moral excellence, can see no necessity for the doctrines of the atonement and free grace through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and therefore he discards these from his creed, and relies upon his own fancied doings as the ground of his acceptance in the sight of God. Now, this corruption of human nature which thus operates against the mind, receiving the testimony of God, man is guilty of *bringing upon himself;* (for, whatever be the difficulties connected with the introduction of moral evil into the universe of an all-perfect Being, the truth of Jehovah's own word standeth sure; he *is* not, and *cannot*, be "the author of sin.") Man, therefore, is equally guilty of all its consequences; and to the same extent, therefore, in which it thus operates, he is chargeable as in the case before, not so much with an intellectual as a moral error; and upon the soundest principles of reason, as well as according to the dictates of revelation, "this is his condemnation, that light has come into the world, and that he has loved the darkness rather than the light, his deeds being evil."

The object of these remarks is to show that the rejection of the divine testimony may arise from other causes than *errors of mere intellect.* The same truth might be illustrated in a variety of ways; but, instead of making more lengthened observations upon so evident a point, we would conclude these prefatory remarks on this metaphysical objection, simply by saying, that testimony in the general, or *the statement of facts,* (which is the true character of the doctrines of the Gospel) requires not so much any high effort of intellect as an attentive, a subdued and unsophisticated mind; and that though upon the record of God, as upon other subjects, there is likely always to exist in this imperfect state of things minor differences of opinion, yet its great leading and vital doctrines are stated with such plainness, that on the great day of account, when the secrets of all hearts are laid open, those who are found to have rejected or distorted these shall be convicted not so much of having had their minds *innocently blinded,*

as of having wilfully and perversely rejected the heavenly message of peace and reconciliation.

With these observations before us, we now proceed more directly to prove the position with which we set out, viz., that, enjoying as we do the light of the Gospel, we are accountable to God, if we do not embrace in faith the pure doctrine which it teaches. Now, we argue this in the first place from the fact, that in the Bible God has given us such a message as in point of evidence, and every thing else connected with its doctrines, appears to him worthy of our acceptance. Secondly, because God has commanded us to *believe* this message, and every portion of this message, just as peremptorily as he has enjoined the performance of moral and religious duties; and, thirdly, because God has annexed the threatening of punishment to the *disobedience* of this command, which he could not have done if man was not accountable for his non-compliance with it.

In the first place, we argue the position in question from the fact, that in the Bible God has given us such a message as in point of evidence, and every thing else connected with its doctrines, appears to him worthy of our acceptance.

That such is the character of the sacred volume, as it appears to the divine mind, must be assented to by every one who admits the reality of a revelation from heaven at all, (and it will be observed, that throughout the whole of this discourse we are *assuming this reality*). We may remark, however, in passing, that if, upon the questioned ground that man is not accountable for his belief, any of the advocates for this tenet wish to bolster up an apology for rejecting revelation as a whole, under the specious plea that the evidence by which its truth is supported can give no satisfaction to their minds, (and this, though not the avowed, is, we fear, in too many instances the real complexion of the case,) then all that we can do is just to say that that evidence has appeared quite satisfactory to minds as acute as ever adorned the history of human intellect and science; that we fear it has never been calmly and dispassionately examined by *them*; that in other matters they give credit to evidence far less weighty every day that they live, and move, and breathe; that it has, moreover, all the evidence which the *God of the Bible designed it to have;* and that if they have examined that evidence with any degree of minuteness at all, their case seems strikingly analogous to that of the Jews of old, who, whilst they searched the Jewish Scriptures, in which they thought they had eternal life, and which alike by types and prophecies "testified of Christ," yet through the strength of their national prejudices, and the general perversity of human nature, would not come unto the Saviour, that they might have that "life" of which their Scriptures spake; and, finally, that if this be their case, it must operate to their condemnation, and with the Jews they must "fall after the same example of unbelief."

But assuming at once that there is a revelation, it must have the character above assigned to it; for even the deist will admit this much, that in the event of God giving any communication to his creatures, that communication must, in respect of every thing that belongs to it, be worthy of the acceptance of those to whom it is granted. If such, then, be the Bible in the eye of that all-wise and gracious Being by whom it has been bestowed, what in his estimation must be the character of those who receive not with child-like confidence its heavenly declarations, and either perversely mutilate or impiously reject any one of its *essential truths?* Can he possibly view them as guiltless? Are they not the despisers of his counsel, the daring and self-constituted arbitrators upon what in wisdom and in mercy he has been pleased to reveal? Their character and their doom are recorded by the finger of God himself. "They wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction!" They virtually, though they may not *avowedly*, set their own wisdom in opposition to his; and instead of listening with the reverence and respect due by creatures to the words of their Creator, and becoming as little children in their tacit and grateful acquiescence in what he has revealed, they step forward in the character of his counsellors, and tell him rather what he *ought* to have revealed. We are here, it may be thought, speaking too strongly; but we have already yielded the point, that upon the record of God there may be minor differences of opinion; and all that we are at present contending for is, that it is the duty of the children of men, living under the light of the Gospel, not in the first instance to frame for themselves, or receive from others,

any system of theology, and then to attempt to make the declarations of Scripture bear upon that system, and that system only, but as "babes to receive with meekness the ingrafted word," and to draw their theology only from the pure fountain of divine truth itself, even from that blessed word which Jehovah himself has given as "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." And we hesitate not to say, that there is a sinfulness in every departure from this simplicity in receiving the declarations of the Lord of heaven and earth.

But, secondly, we argue the position in question from the fact, that God has commanded us to believe this message, and every portion of this message, just as peremptorily as he has enjoined the performance of moral and religious duties.

The words of our Lord himself were, "Repent, and believe the Gospel;" and the apostle John says, "This is the commandment of God, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." To believe in Christ is the simplest form in which it can be viewed, to assent to all the truths which relate to him in the different characters and offices which he sustains as the appointed Mediator; and as he is the *Alpha and the Omega*, the beginning and the end of all that is revealed for our salvation in the Gospel, this is neither more nor less than an injunction to believe in the whole doctrine of grace and of life as set before us in the sacred volume. But if these commands are conceived to be of a too general nature, we have them of a still more particular aspect. The Apostles, assuming that the great leading doctrines of the faith were abundantly apparent, exhort us in such terms as these: "Strive together for the faith of the Gospel." "Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." "Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." "Be nourished up in words of faith and good doctrine." "Despise not prophesyings." "Prove all things." "Hold fast that which is good." And in the Book of Revelation we are enjoined, under the most solemn threatenings, "neither to add to, nor to take away from the words of the book of this prophecy." Now, these commands are just as peremptory as any one commandment contained in the decalogue; and if we are guilty before God in killing or stealing, because he hath said, "Thou shalt not kill, and thou shalt not steal," why are we not guilty before God in not believing the record which he has given concerning his Son, when he has so repeatedly, so earnestly, and so expressly commanded us to believe it? These commands, indeed, were not delivered amidst the thunderings and the lightnings of Sinai; but they come from the same authority, and through a channel that should be no less fitted to influence our obedience. They issue from the hill of Zion, not surrounded with "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," but cheered and gladdened on its every side by the tender mercies of the Lord God of Israel. They are the commands of a reconciling God towards his rebellious creatures. They are enforced by the groans of Gethsemane and the blood of Calvary; by all the grace of Him who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich;" by all the "exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel;" by all that a God of mercy has devised, and a God of mercy has executed for the salvation of the guilty. And in the face of such obligations as these, shall we still dare to affirm, that man is not accountable for his belief, and that in refusing or mutilating the doctrines of mercy, he can either be in a state of innocency or a state of safety? No, no, my friends! the voice of conscience cries aloud with the voice of heavenly wisdom: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you."

But this leads us to suggest farther in proof of the position we are maintaining, that whilst God has thus forcibly commanded the belief of his testimony, he has also annexed the threatening of punishment to the *disobedience* of this command, which he could not have done were man not accountable for his non-compliance with it. The force of this is sufficiently apparent. The simple fact, indeed, that we have a divine command upon the subject, is of itself sufficient to show, that crediting or not crediting the testimony of God is a matter of moral responsibility; for the commands of an infinitely perfect God must in all respects

he holy, and just, and good, suited to the capacities of his creatures, and a reasonable service alike in consideration of their own nature, and the authority by which they are imposed. Were not this their character, a perfectly holy God could not enjoin, and his creatures could not be called upon to obey them. But God has not only commanded the belief of his testimony; he has also held forth unbelief as incurring aggravated guilt and condemnation, and thus not only a crime, but the worst and most ruinous of all the crimes with which we can be chargeable. "He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already; *and for this reason*, "that he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." 'He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." "I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Upon all these grounds, then, we argue the position, that, enjoying as we do the light of the Gospel, we are accountable to God if we do not embrace in faith the pure doctrine which it teaches, and maintain that the contrary sentiment is at variance at once with sound sense—with the very existence of a revelation from heaven at all, and with the authoritative declarations with which that revelation is actually fraught. We might prosecute our reasonings, if necessary, to a much greater length. We might illustrate, for example, the influence which our speculative opinions in matters of religion are fitted to have upon the heart and conduct; and show, that if man is not accountable for his belief in the *doctrines* of the Gospel, neither can he be accountable for a great proportion of the service required by the Gospel. We take an extreme case, but it clearly points out the truth of what has now been stated. It is a direct command to all within the sound of the Gospel, that they "honour the Son even as they honour the Father;" but how can this be done by one who denies the *divinity of the Son?* And if we are not bound to receive the testimony of God on this important point, how can we be bound to comply with the command which can only be reasonable on the truth of that testimony? Similar examples might be produced, which will immediately occur to all who hear me; and we would only add, that as christian *practice* is inseparably connected with the belief of the truth, so also is christian consolation; for the peace and joy of the Gospel flow from believing; and if we either limit or pollute the fountain, we cannot partake as we ought of the refreshing influences of the stream.

Let us never think, then, for a moment, my friends, that in rejecting or distorting the testimony of heaven, we can either be innocent, or safe, or happy; but let us pray that the Spirit may lead us into all the truth, that *ours* may indeed be "the faith that was once delivered unto the saints;" and let us "hold fast the form of sound words which we have heard, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;" and if we go to our Bibles in the temper of little children, anxious only to know with childlike desire and childlike confidence what our Bibles tell us, we shall find that the great lineaments, alike of christian doctrine and christian duty, are there recorded with a plainness, that he who runneth may read them, and that the wayfaring man, though unlettered, may be prevented from erring therein. Why, the *system of Judaism* was grossly perverted at the time of our Lord's appearance; but it was so perverted by human sophistry—by laying aside the doctrines and commandments of God, and holding the idle traditions of men; and, in like manner, the brighter revelation which we enjoy under the dispensation of the Gospel has also been perverted, but the cause is not to be found in any obscurity in the declarations of heaven. It has its origin solely in the pride, the perversity, the prejudice, the worldly-mindedness, and the manifold evils of our fallen nature.

But whilst it is our duty, as well as our interest, to be ourselves "nourished up in words of faith and good doctrine," this is not *all* that is required of us. We must endeavour also to defend and promote the

purity of the faith in the world around us. "It was needful for me," says the Apostle, "to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints." "For there are certain men," he adds, "crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." The necessity here laid on the Apostle is, more or less, laid on the ministers of the Gospel in every age; for in every age is there a tendency to depart from the simplicity that is in Christ. It is not required, however, in order to comply with this injunction, that the private believer should enter into all the heats of theological controversy. We know not a worse element for "growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." But *it is required*, that every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; and that, according to the opportunities which God in his providence vouchsafes to him, he should raise his testimony against every thing that is opposed to the purity of the Word of God, and that he should be watchful over its integrity, and solicitous for its triumphs.

Now, in order to this, we must, in the first place, according to the phrase in the text, be *earnest* for the faith—"*earnestly* contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." This implies in it both *sincerity* and *zeal* for the maintenance and extension of pure truth in the world. We must have a sincere attachment to the cause of Gospel purity living and reigning in our own souls. Without this, our mightiest efforts for its triumphs must be offensive in the sight of Him "who seeth not as man seeth," and who "desireth truth in the inward parts." And to our sincerity again we must add *zeal*. "It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing," and feeling the importance of the divine testimony to ourselves, solicitous for the honour of that God from whose throne of purity and beneficence that testimony has proceeded, and anxious for the welfare of those who are either ignorant of its declarations, or "wresting them to their own destruction," our whole soul should burn with holy ardour, seeking that *that* blissful testimony may be preserved in all its integrity, where it is already enjoyed, and extended more and more in its purifying, and comforting, and saving influences throughout all the families of mankind. Let us then be ever ready to bring all the energies of our nature to this exercise, whatever at any time may be the obstacles we are called upon to encounter. There is no cause more honourable than the cause of God and of holiness; no work more momentous than that of spreading in their native purity and excellence the words of eternal life.

But, secondly, in "contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints," we must do so not only with earnestness, that is, with sincerity and zeal, but also with intelligence and prudence; that is, with an enlarged acquaintance with the truth in our own souls, and with a cautious regard to the best opportunities alike of defending it against the assaults of its enemies, and promoting increasingly its spread in the dark corners of the earth. It is possible to be zealous for error as well as for truth; and even in our regards for the truth, it is possible, by our indiscretion, to retard rather than accelerate its progress. Here, then, we again see the necessity not only for our own sakes, but also for the cause of true religion in the world, of being well grounded in the pure doctrine of Scripture ourselves, as well as the expediency of not allowing our zeal to overstep our judgment, so as to lead us to be too precipitate even when our efforts are directed towards the best and noblest of objects. If we have zeal without knowledge, or *a proper discernment of the truth in our own souls*, we can only build up the cause of ignorance; and if we have zeal without prudence, we may give cause to the adversary to triumph over us; but seldom shall we be able to accomplish the object, however dear to our heart, for which our efforts are put forth.

And, thirdly, if we would "contend successfully for the faith once delivered unto the saints," we must do so by means that are congenial with the *spirit* of the Gospel." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Christianity neither requires nor countenances the engines of cruelty and external violence for bringing men to the obedience of the faith. Nay,

its whole spirit, both in doctrine and in precept, is opposed to such weapons. It has its witness in itself; and the high and holy character of that kingdom which it establishes is, "that it is not of this world." The God whom it calls upon us to worship, is "the *God of peace;*" the Saviour whom it reveals, is "the Prince of peace;" the tidings which it brings, are "the tidings of peace;" and the fruit of that righteousness which it inculcates, is "sown in peace of them that make peace." In our defence, then, of "the truth as it is in Jesus, we must ever keep in remembrance its spiritual and its peaceful nature. It is designed to be supported not by persecution, but persuasion—not by the force of arms, but by the force of argument; and whilst we are to exercise all boldness and zeal, and fearlessly to meet whatever is opposed to *the truth*, never being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but glorying even in the midst of sufferings for his sake—we are even, in the use of the spiritual armour of the faith, "to instruct in the meekness of wisdom," guarding against that "wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God," and seeking in the midst of our contendings to be clothed upon with all the properties of that "wisdom which is from above, and which is first *pure*, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality and without hypocrisy."

And we shall only remark, in the fourth and last place, that if we would "contend successfully for the faith once delivered to the saints," we must study ourselves to exhibit its sanctifying power, by a life and conversation in accordance with the principles we maintain; and we must accompany all our endeavours with the spirit and practice of prayer. Christians should be "living epistles of the Lord Jesus Christ, known and read of all men;" and our most ardent zeal for orthodoxy of creed must be rendered altogether nugatory and inefficient, unless it is commended and enforced by our orthodoxy of practice. We must study, then, to live by the faith we profess to hold, and to exhibit, by the language of action, far more impressive and far more eloquent than the language of the lip, what is the strictness of Gospel purity, and what the richness of Gospel consolation. Remembering, too, amidst all our exertions in this good cause, that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord, that we can prevail. We must unite with these things the spirit of dependence, and of frequent and fervent supplication unto Him "whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure; whose word shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which he pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it, and who hath promised in his faithfulness, that all the ends of the earth shall see his salvation; that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the channel of the sea."

"MY HOUSE IS THE HOUSE OF PRAYER;"

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE POTTERS' INSTITUTION, A NEW PLACE OF WORSHIP, CALEDONIAN POTTERY, TOWNHEAD, GLASGOW, 2D AUGUST, 1835.

By the Rev. ANDREW M'EWEN,
Glasgow.

"*My house is the house of prayer.*"—LUKE xix. 46.

"I WAS glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Such, my friends, was the emphatic and impassioned language in which the royal Psalmist impressed his deep and sincere devotion to the service of God, and such was the lively and heartfelt joy that filled his soul when he engaged in the worship of Jehovah. He was a great and powerful king; yet his high dignity did not permit him to forget the duty which he owed to the "King of kings." The concerns of a stubborn and mighty nation rested upon him; but the cares and anxieties of public duties did not lead him to disregard those which were personal and private. From the solicitudes of the council, and the distractions of the court, in the house of the Lord he sought refuge and repose. He felt that his high station did not exense him from the performance of a duty which is incumbent on every dependent being. He

did not think that his superior wisdom and intelligence rendered his attendance at public worship superfluous, or excused him from serving "the holy One of Israel," according to rites which were of divine appointment. He felt his dependence in the midst of the magnificence that surrounded him. He felt that his more conspicuous and eminent station bound him so much the more strongly to distinguish himself in every duty of religion and piety. Though he was not so blest with religious light as we are; though he lived under an economy less pure and spiritual than that under which we live; though the religion he professed was in a great degree formal, ritual, and typical; yet his heart and affections were eminently engaged in it. With the utmost fervour and delight did he enter the holy temple, or rather tabernacle; and his expressions of the pleasure he felt in his devotions often rise into rapture and enthusiasm. "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be always praising thee. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Nor are there wanting examples, in all succeeding ages, of the conscientious and religious regularity with which the faithful ever attended the public means of grace. Thus, for example, "Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." The just and devout Simeon "waited for the consolation of Israel, and came by the Spirit into the temple of the Lord." "And Anna, the prophetess, departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayer night and day." Peter and John "went up into the temple at the hour of prayer." After the ascension of our Lord, "the Apostles continued daily with one accord in the temple." And our blessed Lord himself "went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, as his custom was." Yea, he on whose benign countenance a modest stillness ever sat, who was all gentleness, and mercy, and kindness, burned with holy zeal, and was roused almost to fury when he saw the holy temple profaned. In the passage before us, we are told, that he drove out the sacrilegious traders, and ejected even by force the money-changers, proclaiming to them, by way of reproof, in the words of the text, "My house is the house of prayer."

These, so striking examples of such excellent men, and the uniform and continuous practice of the faithful in all ages, show that the public worship of God is an institution of divine authority.

That there is a God, is the first suggestion of unassisted reason, and that God ought to be worshipped, is the foundation and first principle of all religion. This must be evident to all who have any just knowledge of God, or any true notion of a divine being; for if we only think for a moment upon the infinite perfections of the divine nature, his glorious majesty, his unlimited power, his unbounded goodness, and his watchful providence, we shall immediately perceive that worship and adoration are a just and fitting tribute to an almighty Sovereign, from creatures daily dependent on his power and goodness.

Accordingly, we have reason to believe, that public worship began with the beginning of the world, and that it has been continued and maintained in all countries and in all times, and under every form of religion that man has devised or God instituted. The ancient Jews, for example, dedicated a seventh part of their time to the service and worship of God. And in the Book of Genesis we read, that God "blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it"—words which seem to imply an injunction to Adam and his household, at that time the little world, to assemble themselves together to offer thanksgiving, and to pay their vows to the Lord; for we conceive that blessing a day, and sanctifying it, are expressions too lofty to signify any thing less than consecrating it to services suitable to the relation in which man stands to his Maker.

We may also remark, that, from the earliest ages, not only particular times, but also particular places, were set apart and consecrated to these sacred services. In the darkest times of heathen idolatry, when there were "gods many, and lords many," magnificent temples were built, stately altars erected, costly sacrifices offered, solemn rites celebrated, and the elegant arts of painting and sculpture, poesy and music, were called into the service of dumb idols. When the law was not given, nor the temple built, nor the priesthood instituted, the holy patriarchs did not worship God merely in their own houses, but in open fields, on lofty mountains, and in shady groves.

These places too were fixed, certain and determinate. They were solemnly appropriated to sacred services, and constantly resorted to on solemn occasions; not from accident or convenience merely, but because they had been signalized by some singular merey of God, or sanctified by the glorious manifestation of his divine presence. Thus, for example, we are told, that "the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and *there* built he an altar nnto the Lord, who appeared unto him." Gen. xii. 7. And, in after life we are told, as "he went on his journeys, unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord. Gen. xiii. 3, 4. "And Abram planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlastiug God." Gen. xxi. 33. Nor was this the conduct of Abraham alone; it was also that of his son. "And the Lord appeared," we are told, "unto Isaac the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham, thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake. And Isaac built an altar *there*, and called upon the name of the Lord." Gen. xxvi. 24.

In after times, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and had no fixed nor settled abode, the tabernacle was erected by God's special command, and richly endowed with sacred utensils and ornaments for his solemn worship. Within this moveable temple the sacred services were solemnized by the priests and the people, regularly assembled for public worship; but when their wandering nation rested from its travels and troubles, and took up their firm and fixed abode in the land of promise, a magnificent temple, the glory of the Jewish nation, and the admiration of the world, abounding with rich vessels of gold and silver, was built, and solemnly dedicated to the service of the Most High. *There* in that temple the priests continually presided; *there* the sacred ceremonies were celebrated; *there* the never-ceasing sacrifice was offered; *there* the sacred fire continued to blaze for ages; *there* the law was read and explained; *there* the faithful resorted "night and day;" and *there* the whole Jewish nation were assembled, three times a-year, at the great and solemn festivals.

But besides, what we may call, this grand national church, there were also synagogues in the lesser cities and provincial towns. These were often honoured by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, and in them prayers were made, and the holy Scriptures read and expounded. Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, we read, that "Moses in old time had in every city those who preached him, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath-day."

Nor were the primitive Christians less devoted to God, or less zealous in his service. Consisting partly of Jews and partly of heathens, they were familiar by previous experience with the public performance of religious worship. In meeting together for praise and prayer, they were not performing a new or singular duty. And so sincerely and seriously did they give themselves to this work, that neither the decrees of emperors, nor the edicts of proconsuls—neither racks, nor chains, nor gibbets, nor any of the most terrific forms of death, could induce them to forsake the assembling of themselves together. In the "upper room at Jerusalem," or in their own houses, or in the oratories built "by the river side," or in temporary sheds, erected for this special purpose, "prayer was wont to be made." When they were driven from the city, they met in the country. They assembled often, as in our own beloved land in days of yore, in forests, in glens, and on the lofty mountains, and not unfrequently in dens and caves of the earth. Beside the tombs of the martyrs, especially under the cloud of night, was their note of praise often heard to ascend. Afterwards, when Christianity triumphed over all the powers of darkness; when it became not only tolerated, but fashionable in the world, they built superb and costly churches, and one vied with another in the erection of temples unto God.

Thus through all ages have sacred edifices been raised for the worship of the divine Being, and superb or convenient structures, such as this in which we are now assembled, consecrated to the glory of God and the maintenance of true religion.

Nor can we suppose that a custom so general, and of so long continuance, should not have foundations of reasonableness and fitness to support it. Indeed, we may observe both of these in the suitableness of public worship to display the glory of God, and to promote the practice of true and undefiled religion.

I. Public worship is calculated to display the glory of God.

As the court of an earthly monarch derives its dignity from the splendour and number of its attendants, so the Church, "the court of the Lord," shows forth the majesty of the Most High by its multitudes of humble worshippers. When we meet together for praise and thanksgiving; when we pay our vows to God in the great congregation, we indicate the high idea which we entertain respecting his nature and dignity. We bear testimony to his power, his wisdom, and his goodness. When we implore his gracious aids, we declare our belief in his mighty power. When we ask his guidance and direction, we acknowledge his unsearchable wisdom. When we cast our cares upon him, and repose our confidence in him amidst all our difficulties and dangers, we show how firmly we are persuaded of his unlimited goodness and unbounded mercy. Hence the royal Psalmist, one of the greatest patterns which the Bible presents in the practice of devotion, was not content with his own personal acknowledgments of the divine goodness, but summoned the whole world to join with him in the praises of Jehovah. "All people that on earth do dwell," says he in the metred version of the 100th psalm," sing to the Lord with cheerful voice," &c. And, again, "Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, and his wonders among all people." Psalm xcvi. 1.

II. Public worship is also calculated to promote and perpetuate the practice of pure and undefiled religion.

It is impossible that the good things which are spoken here, or in other places of worship, from time to time, should be altogether without effect. God has promised, that his "word shall not return unto him void," but shall accomplish the "purpose whereunto it was sent." We may, indeed, almost venture to affirm, that regular attendance at the house of prayer, and a systematic practice of wickedness, cannot exist together. That the one in short will effectually destroy the other; that coming constantly to the church, will either make a man leave off sinning, or, that persisting in evil, will make him neglect the church. It is certain, at least, that many openly and notoriously wicked men have often sloped the paths to vice, so to speak, by ceasing to frequent the house of prayer. Then, by degrees forgetting God and religion, they have become an easy prey to the snares and temptations of the wicked one. Prayer, on the contrary, kindles and keeps up the spirit of piety in the soul. They who unite in setting forth the praises of the Lord, engage in a service eminently calculated to inspire them with serious thoughts, to preserve them from evil courses, and to recall them from the "darkness" of sin into the marvellous light and liberty of the sons of God. So that even in a political point of view, independent of the salvation of the soul altogether, which is by far the most important concern of man, the multiplication of churches, and chapels, and places of worship, such as this in which we have now the honour and happiness this day to meet for the first time, and which we now beseech God to consecrate to his service, must be deemed a *great public good*. For "righteousness exalteth a nation;" and nothing but justice, honour, and piety, can secure the repose of a kingdom, or make a people great, and prosperous, and happy.

But let us not seem by our commendations of public worship to derogate from the excellence of that which is private and domestic. We intend far otherwise. It is, indeed, at home that the true character of a man may most surely be detected. Abroad he is an artificial being. Abroad, a graceful compliance with established rules, or an artful assumption of popular principles, often conceal his genuine sentiments, and cover his real feelings. But at home you see him as he is. *There* the glass and the tinsel are taken off; *there* the heart is laid bare; *there* "the inner man" appears in all its beauty, or in all its deformity. We may, then, almost venture to affirm, that he who does not pray at home, does not pray at church—does not in reality pray at all; and we are quite sure, that the more you worship God in your closets and in your families, the more diligent and the more regular will you be in your attendance at church.

The primitive Christians were very seriously devoted to this duty of private and family devotion. Among them every master of a family was at his own fire side a kind of domestic priest. He instructed his wife, and children, and servants, in the way to heaven. On the evenings of the Lord's day, especially, he read over again at home the Scriptures that had been read at church, and repeated the explanations and instruc-

tions of the minister. In this way he made his house a "a house of prayer;" and, in this sense, every one of us ought to be able to say, respecting our own dwellings, as in the words of the text, "My house is the house of prayer." Yea, the poor tenant of one poor room ought to be able to say of his or of her cheerless abode, "My room is a room of prayer." Here in this lowly dwelling, so dark and so dismal, I have built an altar to the God of my fathers, and offer thereon the daily sacrifice of praise and prayer. Happy man! happy woman! though you are deserted and forsaken of all; though no human being take sweet counsel with you; though no kind relative dissipate the darkness of your uncomely and doleful dwelling, "the King of kings" will "come in and sup with you," and render your meat of herbs more delicious and more grateful than the sumptuous feasts and richly covered tables of the gay and the great. "He will bring with him grace and glory, and no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly."

It is, however, more especially in public worship that God manifests his glorious presence. "He loveth the gates of Zion," that is, the temple built on mount Zion under the Jewish economy, "more than all the dwellings of Jacob"—the private residences of the Jewish nation.

There at "the gates of Zion," or in the house of God if ye will, he displays his mighty power; there he cheers the drooping spirits of his faithful people; there the riches of his divine grace works wonderful things in the salvation of his chosen; and there they are enabled to say, respecting both the place and its exercises, "Holiness belongeth to thy house, O Lord Most High. How dreadful is this place; this is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

So spake wise and good men under the Old Testament dispensation; and our Saviour himself, "an example in all things," regarded the holy place, the temple at Jerusalem, with such reverential awe, that his benign temper was roused to the utmost indignation when he saw it profaned. He violently drove out the sacrilegious intruders, and pronounced those words, by way of reproof, which are the subject of our present meditations, "My house is the house of prayer."

And, my brethren, if the "house of prayer" be thus holy, how great should be the purity of those who frequent it? Here, again, let the royal Psalmist be our director. "Praise is comely for the upright. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." No, it is the frequent fervent prayer of a righteous man "that availeth much." "It is the lips" of him only, "whose heart is pure," that can offer an acceptable sacrifice. Holy hands must be lifted up to a holy God. No sighs, or tears, or prayers, or sacraments, or frequency of resort to church, can compensate for the want of a clean heart and right spirit, *justice*, *mercy*, and *faith*; for God himself has expressly declared, that the "prayers of the wicked are an abomination in his sight;" that he requires "truth in the inward parts;" that, in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin, he hath no pleasure;" but that his delight is in those who do his will, and who meditate on his law day and night.

But why should I detain you longer? You have heard how holy men of old erected altars, and consecrated temples to the service of the Most High; how earnestly, how frequently, how fearlessly, they worshipped him. You have seen that the prayers and the thanksgivings of the "pure in heart" alone are acceptable to God; that the institutions of religion are appointed to display the glory of God, and to promote and perpetuate the practice of pure and undefiled *worship*.

In conclusion, then, what shall I say more to interest your hearts and engage your regular attendance in this place? By uniting in the worship of God on earth, you anticipate the employment of heaven; you assimilate the church militant to the church triumphant; you join in the occupation of "just men made perfect."

The spirits of the illustrious dead, ennobled by their virtue, and clothed with the righteousness of Christ; the angels that excel in strength; the four-and-twenty elders that surround the throne; the great multitude, which no man can number, out of every kindred, nation, and people, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands, cease not day nor night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts;" and shall you not be induced to join them in their song of praise, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, and might, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever." Amen.

ON THE LAST JUDGMENT.

Had our occupation in this discourse been that of the poet or the orator, we have now before us a subject which, for the magnificence of the scene, the magnitude of the transaction, and the durable effects which it draweth on, stands unrivalled in the annals of human knowledge, and with which the powers of conception cannot be brought to contend. Imagination cowers her wing, unable to fetch the compass of the ideal scene. The great white throne descending out of heaven, guarded and begirt with the principalities and powers thereof; the awful presence at whose sight the heavens and the earth flee away, and no place for them is found; the shaking of the mother elements of nature, and the commotion of the hoary deep, to render up their long dissolved dead; the rushing together of quickened men upon all the winds of heaven down to the centre, where the Judge sitteth on his blazing throne; to give form, and figure, and utterance to the mere circumstantial pomp of such a scene, no imagination availeth. Nor doth the understanding labour less. The archangel, with the trump of God, riding sublime in the midst of heaven, and sending through the wildest dominion of death and the grave that sharp summons which divideth the solid earth, and rings through the caverns of the hollow deep, piercing the dull cold ear of death and the grave with the knell of their departed reign; the death of death, the sprouting of the grave with vitality, the reign of life, the second birth of living things, the reunion of the body and soul—the one from unconscious sleep, the other from apprehensive and unquiet abodes—the congregation of all generations over whom the stream of time hath swept—this outstretches my understanding no less than the material imagery confuses my imagination. And when I bring the picture to my heart, its feelings are overwhelmed: when I fancy this quick and conscious frame one instant re-awakened, the next re-invested, the next summoned before the face of the Almighty Judge—now re-begotten, now sifted through every secret corner—my poor soul, possessed with the memory of its misdeeds, submitted to the scorching eye of my Maker—my fate depending upon his lips, my everlasting, changeless fate—I shriek and shiver with mortal apprehension. And when I fancy the myriads of men all standing thus explored and known, I seem to hear their shiverings like the aspen leaves in the still evening of autumn. Pale fear possesseth every countenance, and blank conviction every quaking heart. They stand like men upon the perilous edge of battle, withholden from speech and pinched for breath through excess of struggling emotions—shame, remorse, mortal apprehension, and trembling hope.

Then the recording angel openeth the book of God's remembrance, and inquisition proceedeth apace. Anon they move quicker than the movement of thought to the right and left, two most innumerous companies. From his awful seat, his countenance clothed with the smile which makes all heaven gay, the Judge pronounceth blessing for ever and ever upon the heads of his disciples, and dispenseth to them a kingdom prepared by God from the first of time. To their minds, seized with the tidings of unexpected deliverance, it seemeth as a dream, and they wonder with ecstasy at the unbounded love of their Redeemer. They wonder, and they speak their unworthiness, but they are reassured by the voice of him that changeth not. Then joy seizeth their whole soul, and assurance of immortal bliss. Their trials are ended, their course is finished, the prize is won, and the crown of eternal life is laid up for them in store; and they hasten to inherit the fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore, which are at the right hand of God. Again the Judge lifteth up his voice, his countenance clothed in that frown which kindled hell, and he pronounceth eternal perdition with the devil and his angels, upon the wretched people who despised and rejected him on earth. They remonstrate, but remonstrance is vain. It is finished with hope, it is finished with grace, it is finished with mercy; justice hath begun her terrible reign, to endure for ever. Then arise from myriads of myriads the groans, and shrieks, and throes of despair: they invoke every mother element of nature to consume their being back to her dark womb; they call upon the rocks to crush them, and the hills to cover them from the terrible presence of the Lord and from his consuming wrath. Such episodes of melting tenderness there will be at this final parting of men! such eternal farewells! but, ah! the word farewell hath forgotten its meaning, and wishes of welfare now are vain. A new order of things hath commenced the age of necessity hath begun his reign; all change is for ever sealed.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER TELFER, Johnstone.

A PARTY-SPIRIT UNBECOMING IN CHRISTIANS, AND MINISTERIAL SUCCESS WHOLLY OF GOD;

A SERMON DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. ROBERT STEVENSON TO BE MINISTER OF THE NORTH CHURCH, PAISLEY, ON THE 17TH JULY, 1835; ALSO THE TWO ADDRESSES DELIVERED TO THE MINISTER AND PEOPLE AFTER THE ORDINATION,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER TELFER, A.M.,
Johnstone.

"*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*"—1 COR. iii. 5—7.

AT the time here spoken of, there was much party-spirit discovering itself among the Corinthians. "I am of Paul," was the language of some; "I am of Apollos," was the language of others; and being thus led by their party-spirit to glory in men, they became, it would seem, not envious only, but also contentious, and divisions, it would seem, were unhappily occasioned by their envyings and strife. They were, therefore, it is obvious, in need of correction, because they were obviously worthy of blame; and as Paul did not fail to show that they were blameable, so neither did he fail to show them the necessity of ceasing to act as they had hitherto done. He gave them to know that their glorying in men was in truth nothing less than dishonouring God, and evinced a disposition which rendered them more like men of the world than like persons converted to the christian faith. He gave them to know, that he and Apollos were not to be viewed in any other light than in that of God's ministers, through whose instrumentality they were what they were as christian believers; that although he had planted, and Apollos had watered, yet God, and God only, had given the increase. And, accordingly, the language in which he addressed them was, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

What I intend in the following discourse is, in humble dependence on divine help, to advert,

I. To some of those cases in which party-spirit is made to appear so as to be blameable. To show you,

II. That the ministers of the Gospel can only be useful, and only successful, so far as God blesses the means they employ; and then,

III. To make such remarks in the way of improvement as seem to be suggested by the doctrine here taught us, regarding the success of ministerial labours being wholly of God.

I accordingly proceed to advert,

I. To some of those cases in which party-spirit is made to appear so as to be blameable; and is it not so, that such must be the case of all who may be found to look on their connexion with particular parties as serving of itself to insure their salvation? As persons are at liberty to judge for themselves, so if they be convinced, after searching the Scriptures, after praying to God for his Spirit to direct them, after serious inquiry and due deliberation, that any one party in the christian Church adheres more closely to Scripture than another; who would think of alleging that they are to blame, because with that party they form a connexion? who would not regard them as rather commendable than liable to censure, as rather conscientious than party-spirited? At the same time, however, it is not to be thought that persons may join any party they please without, in any case, doing that which is wrong. If they join any party whose views are unscriptural, whose views are supported by nothing in Scripture, and do not even seem to have Scripture to support them, except when they wrest it to answer their end; if they join any party whose views are unscriptural, and afterwards endeavour to justify their conduct by merely alleging, that such are the views they themselves entertain—that such are the views they think most agreeable to the Holy Scriptures; while nothing but the want of openness to conviction, while nothing but wilful inexcusable ignorance, while nothing but pride, or prejudice, or obstinacy, prevents them from perceiving that such are not the views which the Scriptures authorize; if the case be thus with them, they are certainly blameable, and, as worthy of blame, they shall sooner or later be made to appear. Indeed, if no blame were attachable to any for pleasing themselves in the choice of that party to which they adhere, then persons might unite with atheists or deists, or any other infidels, without being liable to just reprehension. But this of a truth cannot possibly be; and though ours be a land not only of light, but also of liberty, yet the liberty allowed us is certainly abused when we act in opposition to the light we enjoy. There are many blameworthy for joining the parties to which they belong; and there are many besides as assuredly to blame for thinking too much of that party in the church with which they are connected. Their connexion may be such as they have a warrant from Scripture to form. But whenever we find that they pride themselves in it; whenever we find that in their estimation all others are wrong, and none in the right excepting themselves; whenever we find that, under the influence of a party-spirit, they look upon themselves as sure of salvation, and look on all others as yet in their sins; whenever we find that they reckon all doomed to inevitable ruin who do not attend their places of worship, who do not unite with them in communion, who do not, in short, belong to their party, we have then, at the least, good reason to say, that they have not in them the spirit of Christ. No party-distinction can assure any man of the favour of God, or of heavenly felicity. It is not their being members of this or that church, but their being in Christ that warrants in any the hope of salvation. It is not our being called by this or that name, but only our answering the christian name—but only our being in reality Christians, that in the day of the Lord will be found to avail us. On this point the Scriptures are express in their testimony; and hence it is written, that "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; but faith which worketh by love, but keeping the commandments of God." Whatever we may be, if we be not renewed; if we be not created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works; if we be not partakers of precious faith; if we be not washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, we shall never be permitted to have our abode in the kingdom of heaven; and nothing can be vainer than for persons to boast of their being connected with particular parties, as if their being saved were the certain consequence of such a connexion. But another of the cases in which party-spirit is made to appear so as to be blameable, is the case of all those who confine their attachment to particular ministers, and think more highly of their ministrations than they ought to think. There are many in the world who have no real attachment, upon any account, to any of the ministering servants of Christ. There are many who dislike and contemn them all. But such are to be viewed as contemners of

Christ and contemners of God, as well as of ministers, and doubtless it is that they shall not be suffered to escape with impunity. Of such, however, it is not my purpose at present to speak. The persons whom at present I am called to address are those who confine their esteem of God's servants to certain individuals—who think well of some, and speak well of some, but treat all others as unworthy of regard. Now, these are the persons who plainly resemble the Christians in Corinth, and who consequently ought, as were the Corinthians, to be censured and reproved. I mean not to say that hearers should never esteem one minister more than another; I mean not to say that hearers are wrong in feeling for the ministers who labour among them more esteem than for others; for, in 1 Thess. v. 12, we find it thus written: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." I mean not to say that hearers are blameable for esteeming those ministers more highly than others through whom they receive most spiritual benefit. But blameable they are when even to these they confine their attachment. Blameable they are when others they despise, while these they commend. Blameable they are when they do not sincerely esteem all ministers whose preaching and practice are sufficient to prove that they are the servants of Jesus Christ. Some ministers may, like Paul, be more learned than others; some may, like Apollos, be more eloquent than others; but when all are the servants of the same great Master; when all are engaged in the same great work: when all are pursuing the same great end, they ought doubtless to be all very highly esteemed. Let none of them, therefore, be lightly regarded. You may feel more attachment to some than to others without being culpable; but if you set up some in opposition to others, or if others you despise, you must be blame-worthy. Had those of the Corinthians, who said they were of Paul, only spoken of Paul as the minister of Christ, through whom they had obtained most spiritual benefit; or had those of them, who said that they were of Apollos, only spoken of Apollos as the minister of Christ, under whom they had made most progress in religion; had they simply preferred the one to the other, on account of the profit they respectively derived from their ministrations, it is not to be supposed that they would have been liable to censure and reproof; for, as the preaching of one may to some be most useful, while the preaching of another is most useful to others, so persons are not surely to be viewed as blame-worthy, because they attend where they reap most advantage. But the case of these Corinthians was different from this. The adherents of Paul would allow none other to be spoken of with respect. The adherents of Apollos would allow none other to be likened to him. Each party had its favourite, and each, as reprehensible for its party-spirit, the Apostle reproved. Even this, however, was not all that exposed them to merited reproof. They did more than prefer one minister to another; they did more than introduce, by their undue preference, the evils of discord. They likewise, as it were, put Paul and Apollos in the place of God. Had they only esteemed such ministers of the Gospel very highly in love for their works' sake; had they only esteemed them as the instruments employed in doing them good, they would have done nothing more than was really their duty. But they went too far in avowing their attachment. They ascribed too much to Paul and to Apollos; and, instead of acknowledging the agency of God, they confined their acknowledgments to that of his ministers. In this they erred, for this they were culpable; and to show them their error, as also the necessity of having it corrected, the Apostle both asked and answered the questions, "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos?" who are they in reality "but ministers or servants by whom ye believed?"—but instruments employed in making you believers, even as God commissioned and endowed them, and crowned with success their endeavours to profit you. "I, Paul, have introduced the Gospel among you; that Gospel Apollos has continued to preach, and we have done good. But the good we have done has not been done by us in ourselves considered. It has only and wholly been done by God through our instrumentality; and not unto us, but entirely to God should the praise be ascribed. I have planted, Apollos has watered; but all the increase has been given by God. Our labours among you, had it not been for God, would never have promoted your spiritual welfare. Our endowments are of God, as well as our success; and, therefore, as nothing you ought to regard us, while God you regard as all

in all. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

This naturally leads me to what I proposed,

II. To show you that the ministers of the Gospel can only be useful, and only successful so far as God blesses the means they employ. You will observe, my brethren, that Paul here speaks of means being used. In allusion to the calling of gardeners or of husbandmen, he speaks, you will observe, both of planting and of watering as preceding the increase; and, indeed, without both, the hope of an increase would not be authorized. Now, what does this teach us? Does it not teach us plainly, that unless we be diligent in acting the part it becomes us to act as ministers of Christ, in using the means of profiting our people with which we are furnished, we cannot expect to be instruments of good; we cannot expect to be found instrumental either in converting the workers of iniquity, or in building up those who have been converted, either in adding to the number of Christians, or in edifying those who have been numbered among them? I say not that God requires to use means as if it were impossible for him to do good independently of them. I say not that God can never do good without using instruments in the doing of it; for sinners, of a truth, if such were his pleasure, he could easily convert. Saints, of a truth, he could easily edify, without making use of any thing else but the all-powerful agency of his Holy Spirit. At the same time we find, that instruments he is generally pleased to employ; that means he expressly requires us to use, and that those only who faithfully use them are those whom he warrants to look for his blessing. Even means, however, although they be means which he has appointed, although they be means with which he has furnished us, can only by himself be rendered effectual. And, in the nature of things, it cannot be otherwise. In the nature of things, no good can be done by the ministers of the Gospel any farther than their labours are crowned with success by the blessing of God. You will admit, I presume, that all men are sinners—that all men have sinned and fallen in Adam; and that all being sinful, are not only guilty, but also depraved. You will admit, I presume, that sinners, in consequence of their natural depravity, are, besides being blind, and deaf, and dumb, even altogether lifeless in a spiritual sense; and, if this be admitted, what else can be plainer or more undeniable than that God alone, whose power is omnipotent, has sufficiency of power to deliver them out of their natural state. If, in reference to the body, God only can open the eyes of the blind, God only can unstop the ears of the deaf, God only can loose the tongues of the dumb, how can it be supposed that any less power than the power of God is sufficient to effect such changes as these with respect to the soul? If sinners, being dead in trespasses and sins, require to be quickened, how can it be supposed, that any less power than the power of God is sufficient to quicken them; for who else but God can reanimate the dead? If sinners require to be made new creatures—to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, how can it be supposed that any less power than the power of God is sufficient to renew them; for who else but God has power to create? The conversion of sinners may be accomplished, indeed, through our instrumentality; but, doubtless it is, that without God's blessing and co-operation no means we employ can ever be effectual. The evil of sin we may fully describe; the beauty of holiness we may plainly exhibit. The lovely, and loving, and only Saviour, as no less willing than able to save, we may warmly recommend. The joys of heaven as ineffably great, and the torments of hell as unspeakably awful, and both as unending, we may often unfold in addressing the sinful. With counsels the most friendly, with warnings the most solemn, with entreaties the most affectionate, with arguments the most persuasive, we may labour to reclaim them. But although we had the zeal and learning of Paul, although we had besides the eloquence of Apollos; nay, although we were superior to all other men in attainable endowments, and even had for ours the capacities of angels; yet sinners will for us remain where they are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, unless as accompanied with the blessing of God, the efforts we make be crowned with success. And while it is evident, from the nature of things, that the conversion of sinners is wholly of God, it is no less evident, that of God, and God only, is also the progressive improvement of the saints. If the seed which is planted and watered by men have its increase from God in the kingdom of

nature, how can it be supposed that any but God has power to give increase to the seed which is planted and watered by men in the kingdom of grace? If the life of the body be dependent on God, how can it be supposed that any but God has power to sustain—to preserve and to nourish the life of the soul? If none but God can make men believers, who else but he can strengthen their faith? If none but God can make men holy, who else but he can increase their holiness? If none but God can make men alive, who else but he can promote their advancement in the spiritual life? If none but God can begin the good work, who else but he can carry it on and bring it to perfection? "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

I may also appeal in evidence of this to your own observation. Look around you, my brethren, and say if you see not enough to convince you that the ministers of the Gospel can only be useful and only successful so far as God blesses the means they employ. It cannot but be obvious to every observer, that the means and the instruments most likely to be useful often fail of success in the doing of good; while good is often done by means and by instruments which are known and acknowledged to be far less promising; and what does this prove, but that men can do nothing independently of God. If men had a power of their own to be useful, the greatest good would assuredly be done, and done universally by those whose endowments are the most distinguished. Yet this is very far from being the case; and hence it must be evident, that good is not done by the power of man, but by the power of God. It cannot but be obvious to every observer, that persons most likely to be profited by ministers, not unfrequently remain unchanged and unedified; while those who are unlikely, or at least less likely, to be profited by them, often make much improvement; and surely the case would never be thus, were it not that the benefit is wholly of God—that he gives or withholds it as seemeth him good. It cannot but be obvious to every observer, that effects, too wonderful to be the effects of mere human power, are often produced by the ministry of the Gospel; that the conversion of some, and the progress of others, make manifest the certainty of God's operations; and that on the other hand, the many to be met with in all congregations who continue in their unregenerate state, make no less manifest the impotence of ministers to better their condition; for who can suppose, that if ministers had power of their own to convert, they would allow so much as one of their people to remain unconverted?

Nor is it more confirmed by daily observation than it is by experience, that Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but it is God alone who giveth the increase. Is it not undeniable, that many, very many, are yet in their sins; and yet in their sins although they have been called again and again to come to the Saviour; although they have been told again and again of their guilt and of their danger; although they have seen, and although they have heard, again and again the deepest concern expressed for their welfare? And if any of you be included as yet in the number of such, you have plainly enough in your own experience to prove, that nothing less than the power of God is requisite to save you. Since no good effect has even till now been produced by the word; since all the exhortations to which you have listened; since all the importunity, affection, and faithfulness, with which you have been cautioned, and counselled, and reproved, with which you have been urged to look unto Jesus that you might be saved, to come unto Jesus that you might have life, and to put away from you the evil of your doings, to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well; since these, all these, have been found insufficient to make your state a state of salvation, is it not made undoubted by your own experience, that the ministers of the Gospel can only be useful and only successful so far as God blesses the means they employ? And the experience of those whose hearts have been changed must unquestionably serve to confirm the same truth. If to such you belong, you must be aware that the very same means by which you were converted had often been used without any success; but at length when the time to favour you was come, the time God had set, they were rendered successful; and thus you are furnished with evidence in yourselves of its being by grace—by grace alone that you are what you are. You too who are advancing in the christian life, your experience tells you that your progress is of God. What yielded you at one time no comfort and support, has yielded you at another much spiritual benefit. And feeling that on God

you are wholly dependent for edification, that you can only be edified when the word is brought home with power to your hearts, you cannot but know, that "neither is he who planteth any thing, neither he who watereth; but God who giveth the increase."

Turning again to this blessed book, how plainly do we find the doctrine of Paul to be one of those doctrines which are uniformly taught us by the sacred writers. Were it only in our text that the good which is done by the ministers of the Gospel is said to be of God, we would then, even then, have evidence sufficient to render it certain; for, given as it is by inspiration of God, all Scripture is his word, and there can be no truth which even a single declaration of God does not fully establish. But there are other passages, and many other passages in this Book of God, the import of which is similar to that of the passage before us. And hence you well remember, it is said of Lydia that "her heart the Lord opened in attending to the things which were spoken by Paul." Hence also it is said, with respect to those Gentiles whom the preaching of Peter was the means of converting in the house of Cornelius, "Then hath God also unto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." And hence is it said, with respect to the Ephesians, "You hath he quickened, you who were dead in trespasses and sins." "No man," says the Saviour, "can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." And speaking of those who were born again, he represents them in the Gospel according to John, as "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If we view, in connexion with express declarations, the promises of Scripture, such as that in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 26: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." If we view, in connexion with express declarations, the promises of Scripture, we shall find these also making known all the good which has been, or is, or can be attained, as of none else but God. And, in fine, the examples we meet with in Scripture evidently show that the case really is as here represented; for what is the character by which all the saints here spoken of are distinguished? Is it not that of those who by grace have been saved, whom God has been pleased to form for himself, and whose acknowledgment is, we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. The Scriptures, it is true, require us to be diligent, but still they direct us to look upon God as the only author of all our improvement. They require us to work out our own salvation; but it is God, they still add, it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. In short, my fellow-christians, there is not a minister employed by God, who, according to the Scripture, has not his endowments, as well as his success, from God alone. And if all who are learned have their learning from God; if all who are zealous have their zeal from God; if all who are eloquent have their eloquence from God; if all who are useful have their usefulness from God; what can be the inference but that in our text? "So then neither is he who planteth any thing, neither he who watereth; but God who giveth the increase."

It now remains that, as purposed,

III. I make such remarks in the way of improvement as seem to be suggested by the doctrine here taught us, regarding the success of ministerial labours being wholly of God.

Is it so that the success of ministerial labours is wholly of God—that "neither is he who planteth any thing, neither he who watereth; but God who gives the increase?" Then I remark,

1st. That the ministers of the Gospel should look upon themselves as only instrumental in the doing of good.

It is said of Melancthon, that, when he was converted, he thought he should be able to convert very soon all those who sat under him. He thought he should be able to make them soon see what he himself saw, to make them soon feel what he himself felt; but the want of success soon led him to say that he found old Adam, *i. e.* the old man of sin, too powerful an enemy for young Melancthon. His error consisted not in treating with neglect the salvation of sinners, for his heart was set on seeking their salvation; but in failing to expect the success he desired through simple and exclusive dependence on God, and against the same error as one into which they are liable to fall, it assuredly becomes all the ministers of the Gospel to be on their guard. What-

ever may be their religious experience; whatever may be the activity and zeal with which they discharge the duties of their office; whatever may be their affectionate concern for the welfare of souls, or the gifts and graces by which they are distinguished as fitting them for usefulness; they should never forget that they of themselves can neither make saints of those who are sinners, nor build up saints in their most holy faith. They should never forget, that though Paul may plant, and Apollos water, yet it is God alone who giveth the increase. At the same time, however, while looking on themselves as only instrumental in the doing of good, the ministers of the Gospel should not be self-confident, neither should they in any case despair of success. A sense of inability, as well as of unworthiness, may deeply impress them; and they may have to meet with much that is discouraging in the ignorance and indifference, in the obstinate unbelief and hardened impenitence, in the self-sufficiency and worldly-mindedness of those for whose souls they are called to watch. But instead of giving way to despondency or despair in consequence thereof, they ought to consider and bear in remembrance, that as God can give success to the feeblest instruments, so he may yet do good, and much good too, through their instrumentality; for "the treasure of the Gospel is in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of them;" and "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Is it so that the success of ministerial labours is wholly of God? Then I remark,

2d. That God should be viewed by the hearers of the Gospel as he who alone can effectually profit them.

Some hearers of the Gospel are prone to imagine, that, because in their ministers they have men of good talents, they are sure by these talents to be greatly improved; and others, again, because they regard as of no great eminence the ministers appointed to labour among them, are prone to conclude that they need not expect to be profited by them. But if both these classes would look above men to the Author of good, they would act more like those by whom spiritual benefit is rightly expected and really desired. No man of himself can promote their improvement. This can be done by none else but God; and, in doing them good, he may bless one instrument as well as another. Not only, however, ought hearers of the Gospel not to undervalue any more than overvalue the labours of men; they ought also to beware of relying on themselves, as if without God they could profit by the word, or as if they had enough in merely supposing they are profited by it, to render it certain that they are improved. They may be regular in attending the places of instruction; they may hear what is taught them, and much that they hear they may also remember, yea, and go certain lengths in reducing it to practice. Yet as all they do may be done from nothing else but a selfish regard to their worldly reputation or their worldly advantage; so all they acquire may amount to nothing more than that kind of knowledge which tends to puff up. They may only, after all their attention to means, and with all the proficiency they seem to be making, they may only be wise in their own conceits, and only maintaining the form of godliness. Their hearts may have received no saving impression; their hearts may have experienced no saving change; and never, no never, until God himself be pleased to profit them, will they really be profited; for "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God alone giveth the increase."

Is it so that the success of ministerial labours is wholly of God? Then I remark,

3d. That ministers and hearers ought both to be prayerful. They ought to be frequent and fervent in prayer, praying to God through the Lord Jesus Christ for his effectual blessing.

The blessing of God is not to be expected unless it be asked. And why, O why, should we fail to ask it, when on it the success of ministerial labours so entirely depends? Why has the Gospel, even where it is preached, so little success? Why, because God's blessing does not render it successful. And why is God's blessing so often withheld? Why, because too many neglect to implore it. Were we found more prayerful, we would find God's word more productive of good. And, oh! that we were led to be more and more earnest in our supplications, in our prayers for the pouring out of the Spirit, that there may be among us an increase of Christians. An immediate answer to the prayer we offer may

not be received. But an answer to prayers which the Scriptures authorize, which proceed from the heart, and continue to be offered in the Saviour's name, though it may be delayed, shall not be denied; for as seeking God thus is what he requires, so we may rest assured, that our seeking him thus shall not be in vain. Knowing then that God's ministers are nothing without him, be they ever so gifted; knowing that the means which God has appointed, be they ever so abundant, are without his blessing, like wells without water, and clouds without rain; and thinking of the good God is able to do; thinking of the good he is ready to do; thinking of the good that remains to be done, as well as of the good he has done already, by giving effect to the ministry of the Gospel; should we not be excited, both ministers and people, to plead with him in prayer for more and more increase being given by his Spirit to the seed of his word? We are not straitened in him; oh! let us not continue to be straitened in ourselves. Let us imitate in prayer the wrestling of Jacob, and not let him go except he bless us. There is none so ignorant but he can instruct them; there are none so wicked but he can reclaim them; there are none so careless but he can excite them to concern for their souls. He alone, however, is the Author of good; for "neither is he who planteth any thing, neither he who watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Is it so that the success of ministerial labours is wholly of God? Then I remark, in the last place, that the praise of all good should to him be ascribed.

"Why look ye on us?" said Peter and John to the wondering multitude, "why look ye on us, so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? Not I, said Paul, but the grace of God which was with me." And these are examples which the ministers of the Gospel should be careful to imitate.

Even though the means by which ministers are useful were really their own, it would still become them to ascribe their usefulness entirely to God, for it is God alone who giveth the increase; but this is not the case, for the means are God's as well as the success. Even though the abilities by which ministers of the Gospel are fitted for usefulness were really their own, the glory would still be due unto God when they are found useful, for it is God alone who giveth the increase; but this is not the case, for their abilities are of God, as well as their success. They are and have nothing but what they have received; and since all is of God, is it not undeniable that the praise of all should to God be ascribed? To those who are profited, as well as to those who instrumentally profit them, it requires to be said, Give God the glory. Ascribe not to instruments, like Paul and Apollos; ascribe not to those who plant and who water, what is due to Him only who giveth the increase. Let ministers universally as the instruments of good be respected and esteemed, but let none of them be put in the place of God; and what you are forbidden to give unto others, you are also forbidden to take to yourselves. It is not your own goodness that has merited the blessing; it is "not by works of righteousness which you have done, but according to his mercy he saved you by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Not unto us any more than to instruments is, therefore, the language it becomes you to adopt. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory for thy truth and for thy mercy's sake.' Amen.

ADDRESS TO THE MINISTER.

I have now, my dear brother, to address you as the pastor of this congregation; and while it gladdens me to find that you are a pastor so eminently qualified for the pastoral office, by your personal piety, by your amiable dispositions, by your excellent abilities, by your varied acquirements, and by your decidedly evangelical sentiments, I would have you to consider and bear in remembrance, that by grace alone you are what you are. I would have you at the same time to see, that in dependence on the grace of God you make it your concern to grow more and more in the knowledge of Jesus; to increase more and more in resemblance to him; to improve, in a word, to improve more and more in personal religion, that you may be more and more manifestly an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. Were your own improvement to be treated with neglect, how could it be supposed that the improvement of others would be duly regarded? But attending in earnest to your own salvation,

through feeling the importance as well as necessity of growing in grace, it may then be expected that the precious souls for which you have been this day appointed to watch, will have in you a watchman who will care for their welfare, and labour to promote it. I am fully persuaded that, in connexion with your own, the spiritual welfare of this congregation will engage your solicitude; and while it is certain that God alone can make you successful, that God alone can render effectual the means you employ, to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the careless, and to build up saints in their most holy faith, it is no less certain, that in using the means, it becomes you to be diligent. You are, therefore, in private, as well as in public, to plant and to water. In going about from house to house, you are to teach and exhort, to warn and to admonish, to dissuade from evil and encourage to good, with all the affection and with all the fidelity of a man of God. In your public ministrations you are to show to your people the evil of sin, the necessity of salvation, and the only way in which they can be saved. Using with sinners the means of conversion, you are to use with saints the means of affording them comfort and support, the means of reviving and refreshing their souls, the means of promoting their gradual progress in the christian life, and the means of increasing their relative usefulness. You are, in short, to declare the whole counsel of God, and to keep nothing back that you ought to bring forward, how unwelcome soever it may at times prove. You are, above all things, to make Christ prominent in every discourse, and to show to your people that yours is the determination of Paul, to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified. In making preparation for your public appearances, you are to be studious; you are in no case whatever to serve God with nought; you are always to prepare, not what may amuse, or what may entertain, or what may be gratifying to a vain curiosity, but what may be fitted to impress and improve; not what may be new, but what may be good; not what may be pleasing, but what may be profitable; and thus you are to follow these scriptural injunctions. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. Take heed unto thyself and unto the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you an overseer, to feed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." This is merely an outline of that path of duty you are called to pursue, and more at this time I do not regard it as needful to attempt. But I must not allow to pass unnoticed some of those considerations by which you should be led to discharge with fidelity the duties of your office.

You are the first ordained minister of this congregation, and regard to its prosperity, to its future as well as to its present prosperity, could not without giving your heart to your work be becomingly shown. Other reasons, however, much stronger than this, require you to be dutiful. It is the welfare of souls you are called to promote; it is the work of the Lord which you have undertaken; it is the Head of the Church to whom you are accountable. And when you consider the value of souls, how well it shall be with those who are saved, how ill it shall be with those who are lost, how can you but be led to seek their salvation with unceasing concern? When, again, you consider the aggravated guilt contracted by unfaithfulness, and the aggravated punishment thereby incurred, together with the great and glorious rewards which the faithful universally are taught to expect, how can you but be led to give as required full proof of your ministry? "Son of man," said the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel, and to every minister he says the same thing, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." And thus it is written in the Book of Daniel: "They that be

wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

I have only to add, that you be much engaged in the exercise of prayer. You will meet with difficulties, and meet with discouragements in discharging your duty, under which God alone can yield you support, and over which God alone can enable you to triumph. But the aid of God is not to be expected unless it be asked; and when you hear God saying to his ministering servants, "Certainly I will be with you; fear not, neither be dismayed, for I will never leave, I will never forsake you;" when you hear Christ saying to the ministers of his word, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," are you not thus encouraged to pray for assistance in the hope of receiving it? And as God alone can enable you to work, so it is God alone who can give you success. Pray then for his blessing. Pray for his blessing on every service you are called to perform. Pray for yourself and pray for your people. Be instant in prayer, and pray without ceasing, ever bearing in mind, that "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." May the Lord himself bless you, and make you a blessing to this congregation.

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

It only remains that I say a few words to you who are the people of this congregation. You have this day witnessed your pastor's ordination, and permanent, I trust, will be the impression which such a solemnity has made on your hearts; leading you to do more than supply him with the means of living in comfort and respectability; leading you to regard with becoming respect; leading you to hold in becoming estimation the person and labours of your spiritual guide. Having for some time past been labouring among you, he is not a stranger of whom you are ignorant; and now that you yourselves have chosen him for your minister, I hope you will endeavour to profit by his ministry. He has at present good reason to put confidence in you, since you have been led to put confidence in him; and knowing the importance of mutual confidence, I would earnestly exhort you to beware of whatever might tend to prevent its continued exercise. Let nothing be said either of him or to him; let nothing be done in your behaviour towards him that has even the appearance of being inconsistent with the sacred relation in which you now stand. When seen and when spoken of, as well as when addressed, let your feeling ever be that he is the man who watches for your souls. He may have to reprove as well as to encourage; he may have to correct as well as to comfort; but, regarding his reproofs, and regarding his corrections as meant for your good, let them not be despised. In his private visitations receive him as your friend, and in his public ministrations give heed to his messages as the messages of Christ. It is much to be lamented, that the hearing of the word is by many in the world entirely neglected; while by many again it is frequently treated with the greatest indifference. It is much to be lamented, that many never think of attending the sanctuary, except when it happens to suit their convenience, looking on themselves as being at liberty to be present or absent as they may think fit. It is much to be lamented, that even of those whose attendance is regular, there are many to be met with who are captious and critical; who have nothing in view but to see or to be seen, or to gain for themselves a good reputation; whose attention is occupied with their farms and their merchandise, instead of being occupied with the service of God. Oh! let it, I entreat you, be otherwise with you. Never fail to attend God's house of prayer when you ought to attend it. The days of your absence may be those very days in which you would have found some doctrine explained which you did not understand, some duty enjoined of which you were negligent, or some sin exposed in which you indulged, or some counsel given of which you were needful. Never come to the temple with any other view, or for any other end, than to wait upon God in the duties of his worship, and to have your souls profited by the exercises of devotion in which you engage, as well as by the words of eternal life, to which you are privileged with permission to listen.

As to you who are masters, let not the Sabbath be profaned by your servants any

more than by yourselves. Let not the temple be forsaken by your servants any more than by yourselves; and let your minister have in you fellow-labourers with him in the work of the Gospel.

As to you who are parents, let your children betimes be brought to the sanctuary. Let them hear in your precepts, and see in your example, how they ought to act; and let your authority be used in promoting the doing of good, as well as in preventing the doing of evil. Let the worship of God be maintained in your families, and let the pleasing sight of families coming hither in company to worship be exhibited by you.

As to all now hearing me, let your aim be to profit by your pastor's ministrations, and let the blessing of God be earnestly desired on these ministrations, that they may be rendered the means of improving you. Yes, pray for your minister, as well as for yourselves. Pray for his assistance, and pray for his success, ever bearing in mind, that "neither is he who planteth any thing, neither he who watereth; but God who giveth the increase." It has often been said, and the saying I believe has often been verified, that a praying people make a preaching minister. Oh! that it may be verified in reference to you! And, oh! that while you see the concern of your minister to promote your improvement, you may also be showing a concern to improve. Oh! that while you think of his responsibility, you may thereby be led to think of your own; for as he must account for what he has spoken, so you must account for what you have heard. And, oh! that you may all be making preparation for meeting with God. "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Amen.

SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

The source of the christian scheme of hope is the pure grace of God. Whatever are the benefits of the christian dispensation, we have them "according to the riches of his grace." Grace is the free love and favour of God towards his creatures, the source from which all the benefits which they receive must flow. It is an attribute which is still more distinctly displayed, when that favour flows to creatures who are manifestly undeserving of it. We attribute the notion of grace, in a subordinate sense, to our Sovereign, because we feel, that from the exalted seat of regal authority he can deal out favours to men, above and independent of the petty and jarring interests which influence and seem important to men accustomed to act upon a less extended scale. This, as every thing must be for such a purpose, is a poor illustration of that grace which must ever stand alone and unparalleled. But it would lead towards the understanding of the idea which the Scripture conveys of the eternal flow of favour from God to man, irrespective of his personal merits.

Grace is an eternal feature of the divine mind. It is as essential to the idea of God as his justice and his omnipotence. If we could conceive of a being without it, we conceive of an imperfect being—of a being who cannot extend a sovereign compassion to a guilty creature, and pardon the prostrate rebel at his bar. If mercy is a good, it is necessary in God as a part of his character. And if it is in God, it is, from his nature, infinite. It is infinite mercy, and only limited in its application by the harmony of the other attributes of the divine mind.

Judging from the record of God's will, this divine attribute seems peculiarly applicable to our race; for the Scripture reveals to us something of its operations even before the foundation of the world: "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world; according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace." We cannot know how far this glorious attribute may have reached to worlds long since passed away; or what may be its ultimate extent to the inhabitants of other systems that may yet hereafter be called into being. But with reference to our own case, as a fallen and guilty people, it is revealed to us, that the measures for our deliverance were the result of "his will, which he purposed in himself, according to his good pleasure, that in the fulness of time he would gather together into one all things in Christ." This wonderful revelation presents to us

God in the exercise of the attribute of grace, contemplating a yet unformed world, and preparing for it, "in all wisdom and prudence," the exercise of mercy.

This attribute of grace is also infinitely consistent with justice. We can have no idea of discrepancy in the features of the divine mind. If grace purposes to deliver an unworthy creature, "the mystery of God's will" respecting it, involves the satisfaction of offended justice; and in the execution of the project of grace, it ultimately appears that "mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other." We find too, from several passages of Scripture, that though in the instance of one race of beings who have fallen, "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life," and justice is satisfied in its operation; yet, in another, and apparently a higher race who previously fell, justice imperiously ruled, and grace was satisfied "not to spare the angels that sinned, but that they should be cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Thus we see, from different instances, that the principles of the divine mind may dictate a different course of dealing with his creatures, and yet harmonize; that, in the one case, as we know, a full provision was made for the satisfaction of justice, in consistency with the exercise of grace; and that, in the other, there must be also sufficient reasons, though to us unknown, why grace was not violated or compromised in the triumph of unmingled justice.

Lastly, on this part of the subject, the Scripture repeatedly states, that the grace of God is the source of man's salvation. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The grace of God bringeth salvation." Here then is a source, a fountain of help opened to mankind, to which they had naturally no access. The undeserved love and favour of God has devised and executed a scheme of redemption adequate to our wants. It originates entirely in God. It is the result and execution of "his own purpose and grace." And it is "by grace through faith," that all boasting on the part of man may be excluded. This is the very thing which an honest survey of our state convinces us that we need—a redemption accomplished for us, to which we may have recourse—"a way opened" for us through which we may have access. And here we behold the revelation of a completed scheme of salvation involving all this—the grace of God, in fulfilment of its eternal purposes, manifesting itself for us in these last times, and making Jesus Christ to be unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" or, in the words of the text, "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The pride and self-righteousness of man may cavil at, resist, and refuse that redemption, which is thus dealt out, as the exercise of sovereign mercy to a criminal. But let any one, after a fair review of his moral situation, ask himself seriously and candidly, where else he will find a standing that common sense and prudence would justify him in occupying; and the rational answer to the question would be, a flying without delay for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Sermon by the Rev. Robert Montgomery, Airdrie.

SALVATION BY THE SOVEREIGN LOVE AND FREE GRACE OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN MEETING-HOUSE, DUMFRIES, ON SABBATH, 18TH AUGUST, 1833,

By the Rev. ROBERT MONTGOMERY,
Airdrie.

"*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*"—Ephesians ii. 8.

Ephesus was an eminent and ancient city in Asia Minor. It is not exactly known by whom it was founded. Some have attributed it to Ephesus an Amazonian lady; others to Androclus, the son of Codrus, king of Athens. But, by whomsoever it was founded, it is pretty certain that it had arrived at a considerable degree of distinction, even so far back as the days of David, the king of Israel. In later times it was far known, on account of the infamous temple of the false goddess Diana, of whose priests and idolatrous worship we have some account given in the 18th and 19th chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, where is related, in plain language, the rencounter which Paul had with Demetrius, the silversmith, and with the mob which he had excited against him, because their idol worship and shrine making were in danger from the preaching of the Gospel.

Now, I mention these things, merely to show the errors of the human heart, and the prejudices of the place against which the Apostle had to contend. And to show that how much soever the inhabitants of that illustrious city valued themselves, on account of their eminent descent, or their long standing, or their worship of the great goddess Diana, or of the image which fell down from Jupiter; yet, over all that worldly wisdom and pride of men, the word of God was to prevail. The little stone cut from the mountain, without hands, was to strike against that mixture of iron, and brass, and gold, and silver, and clay; then itself become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. So, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle was successful enough to establish a church at Ephesus, ere ever he was driven from its precincts. And to that church was the epistle before us written, about the sixty-fourth year of the incarnation of our Lord, for whose sake Paul was at that time at Rome an ambassador in bonds. Yet, with all authority, he writes to the Ephesians for two distinct purposes, namely, to instruct his followers in the Gospel, and to stop the mouth of all his adversaries, by showing them the falsity of what they had set forth. These things were indispensably necessary for him as a minister of Christ; because, ever since the fall of man, there has obtained in the world the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, even a predilection of the pride of the human heart to be justified upon the footing of its own obedience. And it strengthened this inherent depravity, that the Jews had received the moral and the ceremonial laws

from God, upon the fulfilling of which they trusted that they should be justified in his sight; and were fond to believe, that whosoever spake against that mode of justification was a blasphemer and an idolater. And they managed all their affairs upon the principle, that if any one made himself known to them as a deliverer, he was to act a part so very different from merely telling them, if they repented not they should be destroyed; that he was to take upon him the office, and discharge the duty of Moses, in opposing the impending calamity, by literally casting himself down before the Lord, and entreating of him, that if he would not turn it away from Israel, he would blot his name out of the Book of Life. Such, however, was the false opinion of the Jews, and the blinded imagination of the Gentiles, for the ceremonial law was now abrogated; and, by the deeds of the moral law, no sinful mortal could be justified in the sight of God, nor could they be saved upon the ground of their own corrupt communications, in which they wrought all uncleanness with greediness, being "dead in trespasses and sins." Nor was there any way in which they could be made alive and holy, except by the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit. That is the subject upon which the Apostle is insisting, as is clearly exhibited in the text and in the context. Verse 1. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

In the farther illustration of this subject, there are three topics to which we shall direct our attention: I. Salvation; II. The source whence salvation flows; and, III. The medium through which salvation is applied to the souls of men.

1. Then salvation is the privilege mentioned in the text: "By grace are ye saved." To be saved, is to be delivered from some impending calamity; and to give some idea of what it is to be saved spiritually, by an example taken from natural circumstances, in the end of the 27th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where Paul's voyage to Rome is related, we have a plain account given of what it is to be saved. After we are told of the imminent jeopardy of their lives in which the men were upon the boisterous ocean, we find it stated as the result of the whole: "And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land." That is what it is to be saved, to escape with our lives safe from the danger which threatened us. And spiritual salvation consists in being born again, in having the heart washed with the water of regeneration, and the inner man sprinkled with the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, until that, in all our affections, we are made alive and holy unto God; and this much done, the law hath no more power unto death; but, renewed in the spirit of our minds, we are legally justified in the sight of God, and saved from the penal consequences of sin.

The penalty which God annexed to the precept was death: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But from this we are saved by the blood of Jesus; we have space given us to repent, and a way of access opened up unto the Father, who is encouraging us to lay hold on eternal life. So long as we continued under the impending curse, there was nothing due to us but death. From that, however, we are now freed, and in its room we enjoy all the comforts of time and the blessings of eternity. Yea, "all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose." Death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, were all included in the threatening. Death temporal is the separation of the soul from the body. Death spiritual is the separation of the soul from God. And death eternal is the separation of both soul and body from God for ever. But from all these we are saved. Death temporal, no doubt, performs its work, but it is not now penal; in its rapacity to devour it caught Jesus, but he was too mighty for death; he overcame it, and left it vanquished in the grave; so that it is now in the hand of the Mediator, con-

verted into a mean for bringing his saints to glory. And spiritual death shall have no dominion over us; now and then, indeed, we may experience a compunction of conscience and a pang of mind, because we carry about with us bodies of sin and death. But these shall no longer prove destructive, but are all so many incentives to bring us to Jesus, and to cause us to rely upon him more fully. And death eternal shall have no place; whenever the soul is set free from the body, that moment shall it be in paradise, carried by the angels, and so shall it be for ever with the Lord.

2. We are delivered from the love of sin. By the covenant transgression of Adam, there is a sinful bias given to our minds; we drink in iniquity like water. Because we have broken the law, there is a deep-rooted enmity in our hearts to all that is holy; and we cannot think of returning to God, for that would be calling our sins to remembrance, and setting before our face the curse which awaits us from an offended Judge. But having yielded ourselves up the servants of Satan, we follow him in all the base suggestions which he presents to our view, and have a certain degree of delight in deceiving our neighbours, and in beguiling our own souls, in saying, Peace, peace, while there is no peace from the Lord. And bent upon iniquity, to our own destruction, and to the dishonour of God, we roll sin as a sweet morsel under our tongue. But from all these we are saved. We see the aggravation of our sins in departing from the living God, and become alarmed at their delusive nature and destructive tendency. We learn that sin is nothing other than a false gloss to lead men by imperceptible steps to irretrievable destruction. Then we hate it with all the heart as that exceeding evil thing which God cannot behold but with detestation and abhorrence; and a thing which is seeking to bind ourselves so fast with the bands of deceit, that we shall never be able to get from under its power. But when the Lord enlightens our minds to see sin in its true colours, and in its gross tendency, we have no more relish for it in the heart; but all its endearments to us are done away, because it hath failed, and must necessarily for ever fail to produce what it promised.

We were seeking happiness, and sin presented itself as that which could satisfy; but the more we loved it, and the closer we followed it, we were deepening in misery, until that we had verged on the very borders of death. And even then it pleased us, because there was in our minds a deep-rooted enmity to the holy law of God. But when we obtain salvation from the Lord, we have no more desire for sin; we learn, that inasmuch as we loved it, we hated our own happiness, and were rushing recklessly upon our own destruction. But now does the Lord become the supreme object of our delight. We see in him a beauty and an all-sufficiency suited to give true comfort to the saint, something which is congenial to our celestial part, and which in life and in death continues alike calculated to give deliverance, and to present with a crown of glory. We behold God as our Creator and our most bountiful Benefactor; and are convinced, that in as far as we have followed a sinful course, in so far have we trod the downward path, and have been derogating from God's eternal glory. But the heart being once changed, all love to sin ceases; we are convinced that vanity of vanities is written on all its promises, and that death is its reward. And thence forward we close with God, who conducts us by his counsel, and sing a song of praise to Him that saves us by his love; to Him that redeems us by his blood; to Him that sanctifies us by his Spirit; even to our God be glory for ever and for ever.

3. We are saved from the power of sin; for whom we serve, his we are. The Apostle plainly declares this, (Rom. vi. 16,) "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

But, being saved from the love of sin, it hath no more place in us; for it can have no dominion over us, but just in as far as we indulge in it. Formerly we were led astray, serving divers lusts, "deceiving and being deceived;" but, by being delivered from the power of sin, the whole bent of our inclinations acquires a new direction. Formerly our thoughts were carnal, sensual, devilish; now they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness—love to God and love to the brethren. And our whole aim takes a heavenly direction; we long for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and for the hastening of his glory. The world is no longer the place of our rest; but we confess ourselves as looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and whose maker is God. And we view every object

which leads away from that as an enemy labouring to destroy our best comforts, and to take away our dearest enjoyments. Here, indeed, we live not by sight, but by faith; and, in getting from under the dominion of sin, there is a conflict in the soul which cannot be maintained otherwise than by the mighty power of God. There is the living principle of faith implanted in the believer, which must struggle against principalities and powers—against spiritual wickednesses in high places. These are the temptations of Satan and the lusts of the flesh, which, like a rolling torrent, gain impetuosity as they proceed, and are supported by the most incongruous of all measures; they feed upon the slain but to be strengthened for the slaughter, and are immortalled by the very means of death. And never, never could the soul get from under that leaguing of enemies in counsel, were it not gifted by the persevering grace of God. But he that is for us is more than all those who possibly can be against us, and no good thing of all his promise will he withhold from them who rely upon him in the exercise of faith; but he will perfect their strength unto victory, and their victory unto triumph.

That, however, is done only by the christian course being persisted in. There is, and must be, a leaving of the first principles or rudiments of the world, and consequent upon that a going onwards to perfection. But all those who thus make progress in their heavenward course will God crown with the fulness of the stature of manhood in Christ. Without this progressive work there could be no life of God in the soul of man. We must not be to-day in convictions, and to-morrow in sins. That would indicate neither deliverance from the power of sin, nor freedom from the influence of the enemy; but it would be turning again to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, which very ill accord with the character of the redeemed. There is not, however, in the real saint that halting between two opinions. In him there is a spiritual freedom from the power of sin, and an onward persevering in holiness, which is figured out, in the language of inspiration, by first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear. And, again, by the great Head of the Church wisely administering to the saints, as they severally need, milk for babes, and strong meat for such as are of full age; so that the nearer we are brought to the regions of death and the grave, we are the more fitted for inheriting the upper sanctuary and the heavenly Jerusalem, until the day break, and the shadows flee away, and we are clasped in the arms of the Redeemer, and shall go no more out.

4. We are saved from the practice of sin. This refers to the external part of the Christian's character, and even in *that* it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. We must be careful to discharge our relative duties to all those among whom the Lord has given us our being, and has fixed the bounds of our habitations. We must do violence to no man, no, not even to the most abandoned and profligate; for, in doing that, would we be just so much the more assimilated to themselves. We will not encroach upon the rights of our neighbours, by removing their land-marks, or appropriating to ourselves their possessions, nor by any means bring a reproach upon their character, by speaking evil of their good name; but we must love all mankind, even as God for Christ's sake hath first loved us. If our neighbour's cattle have strayed, we will restore them to him. If his children or his servants are in distress, we will assist them; and, in every part of our deportment, as in the presence of God and a good conscience, do to him as we would desire him to do to us.

More particularly we will discharge our intimate obligations with charity and love. Are we children, we will reverence our parents, and most punctually obey them; are we parents, we will not provoke our children to wrath, but educate them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; are we servants, we will do our business with faithfulness, as the servants of Christ; and if we be masters, we will mind the same things, forbearing threatening, knowing also that our Master is in heaven. Now, these are important duties, and they have all been violated by sin; but, if we are saved from the practice of sin, we will most punctually perform them; for if we are not correct in our moral walk, and be not strictly regulated by the rules of christian prudence, we will give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to speak reproachfully, and bear mournful evidence against our own souls that we are not yet saved from the practice. It will be uniformly found that those saved from the practice of sin indicate their holy inclinations, by engaging in all revealed duty. The Lord Jesus Christ has con-

cluded the whole human race under two grand classes, when he says, "He that is not for me is against me." And there is no possibility of a man being a Christian in heart without showing it in the obedience of his life, just for this plain reason, that "faith without works is dead." If, then, we are saved from the practice of sin, we will engage in all holy duty; we will be faithful in the performance of family prayer day by day in the devotions of the closet, and in the ejaculations of the heart more frequently. We will read the Scriptures with delight, and contemplate them with devout meditation, giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and most scrupulously maintain a conscience void of offence before God and before men. We will be careful to sanctify the Sabbath throughout to the Lord, setting it apart from the things of time, to prepare for eternity. On that day we will appear in the meetings of God's people, to sing his praises, to show forth his glory, and most conscientiously approach him in all the ordinances of the gospel of reconciliation. And if we hold more distinguished relations among professing Christians, we will travail as in birth till Christ be formed in men, the hope of glory; "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And we will be mindful of the scriptural injunction, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." For there are many men who make a profession of Christ's name, who give a verbal assent to the happy state of the righteous, and seem to wish that their last end may be like his, but who through their whole life are never careful to be saved from the practice of sin. They take it for granted that all is well, that they are in Christ Jesus, and that they love his cause; yet they turn aside to the things of the world, and are not careful to fulfil the Christian's duty; while they nevertheless persuade themselves that they are the beloved of the Lord, and that hereafter they shall perform his will more perfectly. But there cannot be a more perverse, nor a more deplorable character than this. What, to be a confessed disciple of Jesus and not to do his commandments! The Bible acknowledges no such saint; for the uniform language of inspiration is, "Hereby shall ye know that ye are my disciples if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." And there cannot, in all the resources of hypocrites, be either a more gross delusion, or one more certainly destructive to their souls, than for them to have made a profession of the religion of Jesus, and then to have gone off after the pursuits of this world, seeking to fulfil the lusts of the flesh under that profession, as a cloak of covering to quiet their own consciences. That is verily a wounding of Jesus in the house of his friends. And what reason can they give for it? Is he a hard master? Is he not able to reward them? Or would they have both the world and Jesus? This is simply impossible; for they cannot serve God and mammon. But plainly they are not yet saved from the practice of sin, and if ever they are saved, it shall be through a fiery trial; for in their character they come near to that description of persons called "evil men and seducers," and of whom it is said, they "shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." But very different, indeed, is the character of those who are saved from the practice of sin; they love the Lord, and they walk before him in all his commandments and ordinances blamelessly.

II. We come now to notice the source whence this salvation flows, and that is the sovereign love and free grace of God. "As truly as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but rather that he would turn unto me and live." Now, this declaration is altogether of the sovereign love and free grace of God, because it remained with the Author of it to manifest whether he would, or would not, be reconciled to man, and reconcile man to himself. God is the Creator of all things; he alone hath immortality; he is self-existent, and is from everlasting to everlasting the same; besides him there is no God; he knows not any. He called all things into existence; he created them for his own glory, and he made them all very good; but man sinned against him, and by his sin entailed misery on himself and on all his descendants. In this case, then, no one man could assist another, nor could any creature that had not sinned come in to his help; for all were amenable to the same Creator, and owed him, on their own account, their uttermost efforts to show forth his glory; so that no created thing could prefer a claim against the Creator; but it remained with him to manifest how he would manage his moral kingdom, and verily he condescended

to save man. And this condescension was altogether of his sovereign love and mere good pleasure; no object out of himself could induce him to it; above him there was none; below him there could be none; from the holy perfections of deity all were so infinitely far removed, that their whole duty lay in showing forth God's glory, by obeying his high commands. The sovereign love and free grace of God are the source of salvation; because when man had sinned, and all the clouds of wrath were thickening around him, and all the thunders of Jehovah's justice were ready to burst around man's guilty head, it remained with God to manifest whether justice should take its course, or he would stretch out his strong arm to deliver; whether he would be reconciled to man, or punish him according to his iniquities, by everlastingly secluding him from his presence. And, until the decree was declared, there must have been a solemn pause, as if the pulse of nature stood. All the angels in glory must have looked on with intense interest, and devils must have trembled in dire suspense for the declaration of the divine will, which made fully known whether man was to be restored to the favour of his God, or eternally to expiate his guilt, by bearing the punishment due to his crimes. And, at that all-important moment, in the riches of his grace, God gave the intimation of his pleasure, Deliver from going down to the pit; for I will be merciful.

2. The sovereign love and free grace of God are the source of salvation. inasmuch as, in the bowels of his compassion, God so loved the world, that he gave the Son of his bosom for the sin of man's soul, and thus provided a ransom. When the rebellion of man had plunged him into the depth of distress, and he was altogether helpless as an infant abandoned in the open field, then did God make known the deliverer. This no ingenuity of man could ever have discovered, nor could the united prowess of the human race ever have procured the Mediator. Men might have thought of giving the seed of their bodies for the sin of their souls; that, however, would only have been deepening their crime. Or did they think of piling the woods of the forest, and sacrificing thereon the cattle of ten thousand hills? that would have been giving nothing unto God, but what doth unto him of right pertain; for the world and all that therein is belongs unto the Lord. Or did they think of satisfying the law for the salvation of their souls? that was utterly impossible; for, ere ever they could obey the law, it was necessary they should bear its penalty, and that was eternal death. But it leads into an absolute contradiction in terms to say, that any finite being could procure eternal life by enduring eternal death, for the one necessarily precludes the other.

But allow that there had been, on the part of man, an ability to have done something for the salvation of his soul, God was the offended party; and it remained with him to tell whether or not he would admit of a ransom, as well as to say what would be a sufficient satisfaction to his justice. And we know, from the declarations of Scripture, and from the nature of the deliverance, that no creature could ever have procured it. The discovery was infinite, because an infinite person was found. And no man could ever have claimed salvation as his legal right, because that would have been to have gained the ascendency over the supreme God, and to have made the offended party give satisfaction for the sin of the offending. But here God's love to man was such, that he both devised the scheme of salvation, and provided the Saviour. He gave the just person to suffer and die in the room and stead of the unjust, and to make complete atonement, by fulfilling the whole law, and effecting an everlasting righteousness; and upon the merits of that satisfaction is salvation granted to us through the free grace of our God.

3. The sovereign love and free grace of God are the source of salvation, inasmuch as salvation can be applied to the soul *only* by the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but God alone can give the increase." There is both a natural and a moral inability about man to prevent him from being saved. His moral inability lies in the utter perversion of his will; he has no desire for that which is good; but his whole affections are set on things which are evil, and his natural inability lies in the utter incompetency of created capacity to change itself. Man is dead by nature, and his heart is hard as the nether-millstone; but, before he can be saved, his heart must be changed, and right principles must be implanted within him, which never could be done by his own efforts. Sooner might that which is naturally dead raise itself to

life, than could a man who is spiritually dead of himself become spiritually alive. And equally soon might that which hath no existence create itself, as could the old man become the new creature, holy and acceptable to God. All experience of the saints corroborates this. The bold and evangelical prophet Isaiah portrayed in graphic language the glory of God; night and day he warned the surrounding world, by opposing all the pride of the passing age. He could depict the depravity of the human heart, and he could describe the coming of the Saviour with as much minuteness, as though the scene of Christ's incarnation had passed in review before him; yet when he had done all this, and looked for the fruits of his labours, in mournful plaint he had to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" And under the mellifluous, but no less godly suasion of Ezekiel, the people came to him as God's people cometh, and sat under his administrations as God's people sitteth; but, after all, it is said of him, "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." And the apostle Paul, from his experience, could announce the embittered enmity of the unregenerated heart; by his learning he could remove the false glosses of sophistry; and by his preaching, when he applied the law of God to the heart of man, reasoning of temperance, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, he could even make a Felix tremble; but all the length which that could go, was only almost to persuade him to be a Christian. And every other who labours in the cause of the Lord Jesus, will have like reasons for arriving at the conclusion, that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

III. We come now to notice the medium through which salvation is applied to the souls of men, and that is through faith: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Faith, in the case of the saint, is the same thing which is known in the world by the name of belief, and signifies the assent of the mind to the truth of some statement, so as to act upon the belief of what is said to us. Of this we have a plain instance given in the 11th chapter of John's gospel, which may serve as an example of what it is to believe. While Jesus was at a distance, Lazarus was sick, and died, and was laid in the grave; but Jesus came to Bethany, that the mighty works of God might be manifest in him. Now, while in the way Martha met him, and, after she had saluted him as the Lord's Christ, she went away and told Mary her sister privately, saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee. And as soon as Mary heard that, she acted upon the belief of what was said; she rose up quickly and came to Jesus. But of a like kind is that faith by which salvation is applied to the souls of men. It is founded upon evidence, and that evidence is the testimony of God. Hence it is defined by the Apostle in another epistle to be the belief of the truth, and is the appropriating act by which salvation, through the grace of God, is given unto men; for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. They believe all that he hath told them concerning their original character; that they were created pure and holy, and that they bare all the moral image of their God in the rectitude of their nature. They believe that they enjoyed a succession of perfect blessedness, corresponding to the state of their innocence and the benignity of their God, and that it was by their own voluntary rebellion they entailed upon themselves that legal guilt which hath plunged them into the depth of that wretchedness and wo, in which they feel that they are by nature and by practice; and that there is no way of being delivered from sin and misery but through the mediation of Jesus. They believe that sin is really such an exceeding evil thing in the sight of God, that he cannot but have it punished, either in the principal or in the substitute; and that God hath given his beloved Son for the very purpose, that he should take away the guilt of his chosen; that he hath paid all the penalty, and suffered the wrath of God even to the death, and is now exalted to the throne of glory, where he continues to make intercession for us; and that, where he is, there is a glorious rest in reserve for all who love his appearing; and that from the high heavens he shall come forth in the end to judge the living and the dead, accompanied with ten thousand times ten thousands of his saints, and all his holy angels with him.

They believe that God is the Father of glory, even altogether such as he hath revealed himself to be in his holy word from everlasting to everlasting God. But in all that belief there is no merit either to purchase the love of God, or to palliate the guilt of men. But the Westminster divines have given the scriptural definition of the doctrine, when they say, "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the Gospel." But this receiving and resting upon Christ precludes the very idea of salvation by works.

2. Salvation is by grace when applied to our souls through faith, because faith neither flows from intrinsic worth in us, nor does it beget in our hearts any principle, upon the ground of which we can merit salvation. We are by nature the blackest in character, and the most perverse in practice, that moral subjects can possibly be. We have departed from God, and, in doing so, are separated alike from every feeling of meekness, and from every principle of holiness. We are intent on every thing that loveth and that maketh a lie; and so far are we from meriting salvation, that it is while in this state that faith is given us, and that we are converted. And, for the establishing that we are thus wicked by nature, if we take but one connected view of the character of man ever since the commencement of his history, we will readily find that the prevailing principle of his heart has been to sin and to death. He was, indeed, created pure and perfect, possessing all the moral image of his God in the rectitude of his nature. This, however, he retained not, but by transgression fell; and ever since has the depravity of his heart operated against every principle of good. Cain hated Abel with a mortal enmity; and, after speaking to him in all the base dissimulation of his soul, by and by he rose up in the field and slew him. And wherefore did he that? Just because Abel's works were righteous to the reproval of Cain's wicked deeds. Now, a like domination of enmity hath reigned down through the generations of men. Soon did the whole human family become so grossly corrupt, that their sins excited the just indignation of God, and recoiled upon their own guilty heads in the flood of Noah, which swept them all away, with few, that is to say, eight souls, being saved. Yet, very soon after that disaster, they joined in league again to break the commandments of God, and set about building a tower, whose battlements should threaten heaven, for which their language was confounded, and they scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. Nor was the returning interval long, until the cry of their wickedness became so great, that it ascended up and entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and caused liquid brimstone in flaming fire to be rained out of heaven, to burn up Sodom and the cities of the plain. And so in succession wherever there was a tendency to good manifested, there was the malevolence of the wicked sent forth to assail and overpower it. This corruption branched out into all oppression and every evil act. Men wrought all uncleanness with greediness, to the destruction the one of the other; they verged into polytheism and idol worship, and indulged in all the vain ratiocinations of the fool, who hath said, There is no God; and degenerated into the vilest grade of guilt and wretchedness which the rational creature is capable of reaching, until we find them, described by the Spirit of inspiration in the Epistle to the Romans, as having "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers," and all such evil works. And then in the 3d verse of the chapter, where the text lies, does the Apostle bring the argument home to the case in hand, when he says, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works, nay, but by the law of faith. Where then is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolishness the wisdom of this world.

If this, then, be the state of the depraved mind, and all Scripture and experience agree in proclaiming that it is, there can be no merit in us wherefore we should be saved. But if there be merit about man, it must lie either in the designs of his heart, or in the

doings of his hand. In the doings of his hand it is not; for these, in their uniform tendency, are alike destructive to man, and dishonouring to God; neither is it in the designs of his heart, for these are the principles whence his actions proceed; he believes, and therefore he speaks; he desires, and therefore he acts. And could it be shown that the doings of a man proceed otherwise than from the designs of his heart, at that moment would he cease to be a moral and responsible being. Such, however, is contrary to the facts of the case; so that we are forced to conclude, from all that is in or about man, if he possesses merit, that it must lie in opposing his Maker. But so long as God's commandments are holy, and just, and good, it is contrary to the nature of things that there should be merit in their opposite; and so long as God cannot reward a man for doing evil, so long must we be destitute of merit; and so long must salvation be of the sovereign love and free grace of God, when applied to our souls through faith; because faith is itself the gift of God.

3. Salvation through faith is by grace; because, even when we are made to believe, faith gives no remuneration to God for what we receive. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?" Man believes, and is converted; but it is to the consolation of his own soul. By faith he turns from sin to righteousness; but it is that he may live for ever. Nay, all the blessings resulting from salvation centre upon man; if he believes, it is that he may be saved: if he becomes holy, it is that he may be taken into union and fellowship with God, who for that end hath shown the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. When God gave his omnific word for the creation of the world, it was for his own glory. He made man a moral creature, possessing pure and holy principles, and placed him in all that due obedience which the circumstances of the case required, that he might show forth his glory. Divine meditation was to be the business of his life, and one glow of glory to God was to swell the anthems of his praise, for all the blessings of time which lay in rich retreat on this hand and on that, and for all the unspeakable pleasure he derived from the immediate intercourse which he held with the God of heaven.

Now, if man owed perfect obedience to God, while his nature was pure and his affections uncontaminated, he never could by disobeying owe less. Nor could he ever, either by bodily exertion or mental effort, render more than complete obedience to the Lord. Then, when he is redeemed and cleansed from all iniquity, though, through faith, he render to God the willing obedience of his life, it is no more than he owed ere ever he had sinned, and continued to owe during the whole time of his alienation; and, in the estimation of the saint, so far is faith from being a reward for the salvation given, that it is one continued confession of his utter unworthiness to be made partaker of the Lord's tender loving kindness. And it lays him under an eternal debt of gratitude to that mighty Jehovah who created him, possessed of every intellectual delight; and who, when he had exposed himself to all the pangs of an awakened conscience, and to all the pains of an eternal damnation, condescended to redeem him by the greatest of all gifts, even that of his well-beloved Son; and to elevate him to a rank higher than that of the angels, for they are to be his servants; and to give him a likeness to the Lamb, and a place before the throne, where he shall continue to reflect the radiance of his uncreated Benefactor. Then tell it not in heaven, mention it not in the hearing of the holy, that their faith and feeble efforts at obedience are a reward for the salvation of their souls. No; even faith is through grace, and all is through grace, whatsoever of love, of self-denial, of joy, meekness, long-suffering, perseverance, and hope; all is of the riches of God's free grace. And there is no remuneration on the part of man; but God is all and in all. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God:" not of works, lest any man should boast.

I shall now conclude this discourse with a few remarks.

1st. From what has been said, learn the humility with which this subject ought to inspire us. Is all by grace? Then let us come to God, humbled in heart and soul, and entreat of him that he would make us participants of his free favour; that he would put down every high thought, and every haughty imagination, which exalteth itself; that we may be enabled to say, "Not unto us, O God; not unto us, but to thy name be the glory."

When in the paradise of God we had

violated our innocence, and sunk ourselves to the depths of moral depravity and of physical wretchedness, then did God condescend to save us from all unrighteousness, and to exalt us to every high honour. But just as one who has been rescued from imminent danger, will be ever on the watch, lest it should again overtake him. So ought we to be humbled in heart and soul, lest we be puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the evil One. And this the more so, that there are lusts within, and enemies without, ever waiting for the halting of the spiritual man; and there is no way of escaping these, but in all humility of mind imitating the Lord Jesus, even as he was meek and lowly, in all obedience to the will of his heavenly Father. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

2d. From this subject, learn the duty of living in complete obedience to the holy will of God. In this passage there is no mention made of the world, nor of the things of the world; but salvation is the whole theme of the verse, and that is certainly calculated to direct our attention from time unto eternity. And to draw forth our desires from earth to heaven, for there is our treasure, and there should our hearts be also:—

> 'Set thou thy trust upon the Lord,
> And be thou doing good;
> And so thou in the land shalt dwell,
> And verily have food."

But how directly opposed to that is the general custom of the Christian. Here we form endearments, and we forecast devices, to be executed only in a length of years. And, while engrossed in these, we say in our practice, and, alas! must I add, but too often in our hearts, that we are not ready to go with our God, until these be fulfilled. But how lawful and binding soever these engagements may in themselves be, the frame of mind with which they are indulged is the most unwarranted; for we do look forward to a length of days, and, upon the mere presumption that we shall reach a long life, excuse ourselves for not living, in every moment of our existence, ready to resign our stewardship, and to say, "Here am I, O God, do with me as seemeth thee good."

But were we to live in complete obedience to the holy will of God, we would be deterred from many sins; because the question would be ever recurring, In what light would I appear were I at this moment, and in this action, to be called before my Judge? But, by taking it for granted that we shall yet live to complete some favourite scheme, we are ready to cover our transgressions, with the hope that we shall afterwards repent. Than which frame of mind there can scarcely be a more depraved, nor one farther removed from the spiritual exercise of groaning earnestly, that we may be clothed upon with the righteousness of Christ; and longing to have this mortal body changed for the immortal, and to be with Christ, which is far better. But plainly our duty is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then let all these things be added, or be not added, as it may, all shall be well. We are to engage in every duty of time, and in all our business of life, in complete obedience to the God of heaven; and to say, on every occasion, "Not as I will, O Father, but as thou wilt;" and, in this course of life and frame of mind, sin may be lost; something of the world may be lost, and its corresponding grovelling anxiety of mind may be lost. But opposed to these shall be gained peace of conscience, complete success, the glory of God, and our own eternal salvation: "By grace through faith; it is the gift of God."

3d. From this subject learn the complete disappointment which all those shall receive who trust to the law for the salvation of their souls. There is confessedly but one way which God hath pointed out for the salvation of men; and those who receive it in a different, have not the salvation of God. And if they gain a glory, it shall not be the glory of heaven. But it is not possible that men can be saved out of that way which God hath given; for, in every other resource, their hope shall ultimately prove as the giving up of the ghost; because there is salvation given in no other name under heaven, known among men, than in the name of Jesus, and that is entirely of grace. The intentions of men may be the most sincere; their aims may be the most eagerly followed out; they may forego pleasure, and completely disregard earthly profit; they may spend long nights in sleepless anxiety, and days in deep bent mental research, to find out a refuge other than God has given; but all shall fail, and like themselves fade away. They may brace every nerve of the body, and strain every faculty of the mind, to do penance

for the sin of the soul; but, when weighed in the balance, all shall be found more light than vanity; for there is but one strait gate, and one narrow way, which is Christ to the Father. All are broad besides, and all who walk in them shall ultimately be destroyed. Even allow that they were to arrive at the gate of heaven, and to knock there, to them it shall never be opened. Their voice is not known to him that is within, and that is necessary before they can be admitted; for it is the signal by which the porter shall open unto them.

And salvation being of the sovereign love and free grace of God, it remains with the Author of it to tell how he will be approached; and it is the duty of all who would obtain salvation to receive it in his own way. And to sum up this remark, it shall be found in the end, that all who have sought justification upon a legal footing shall by the law be rendered accursed. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the presence of God; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

4th. From this subject learn the firm footing upon which believers stand. The foundation of their hope is placed upon Christ, who is the Rock of ages, and the pillar and ground of the truth. The envy of men may assail them on the one hand, and the lusts of the flesh on the other; but, through the grace of God, these two shall be converted into friendly monitors, to cause them with more alacrity to run their christian course, and to stay not in all the plain, for the judgments of God will be down upon sin. And, when thus tried, they may have their doubts and their fears, and their seasons of weeping enduring for a night. But joy cometh in the morning; God the Father is for them; Christ the Mediator hath redeemed them; the Holy Spirit the Comforter makes his abode with them, to apply to their souls all the efficacies of divine grace, and to ward off every opposing energy. Then speak out, ye enemies of the Lord, if ye think to prevail; if ye think to snatch the prey from the hand of the mighty. But he that is for us is more than all those who possibly can be against us; and no good thing of all his promise shall fail to them who seek him in the exercise of faith. But the saved of God shall soar on the wings of faith and love upwards and onwards, from strength to strength, from grace to glory, and in the fulness of glory to God. Then avaunt on every enemy, on every sin, on every sorrow—these shall be left far behind; for heaven is a pure celestial rest, where no unclean thing shall ever enter; but where the redeemed shall see face to face, exult in the resplendency of glory, and know even as they are known; and shall unceasing sing, Alleluia, blessing, and honour, and glory, be unto our God; and, again, Alleluia to God, for ever and for ever. Amen.

ON THE HAPPINESS SPRINGING FROM IMPRESSIONS OF TRUTH AND ATTACHMENT TO THE DEITY.

We come into the world weak, indeed, and ignorant, but endued with capacities of endless improvement. Were our faculties freely allowed to unfold, and directed to their proper objects, our progress in wisdom would be easy and rapid, and our enjoyments exalted and substantial. But, such powerful obstacles are, on all hands, opposed to our entrance into that path which our Creator has marked out for us, that multitudes never enter into it at all, and the small number who do, persevere in their progress only by a continual warfare. The present world may, with respect to the interests of our souls, be justly compared to an enemy's country, where we have not only to engage in open battle, but also to guard against secret ambuscades. Multiplied prejudices, consecrated by antiquity; corrupt opinions, strengthened in their march through a long succession of ages; groundless associations of ideas, consolidated and confirmed by all the power of habit and custom; delusive pleasures, flattering the senses, and cherished with the warmth of appetite; bad example, disguised under some splendid appearance; the contagion of wicked company; fraud and deception, clothed in the specious colours of friendship and truth; generous and good principles, turned from their objects, and rushing to excess;—these open or secret enemies surround us on every side, and either entice or drag us into the paths of folly, of vice, and of misery.

When we hang on the breast, we suck

the prejudices of our nurses with the nourishment we receive from them, and our minds begin to acquire distortion, when our bodies begin their growth. The whole period of infancy is delivered over to the impressions of sense, which are established long before reason has any power to oppose them. Youth is inflamed with all the ardour of passion, and, impatient of restraint, and thirsting for gratification, spurns the dictates of that wisdom whose seat was never placed on the firm basis of early education. Manhood, already corrupted in youth, turns its views to new objects; but these are equally vain and unprofitable; and the wisdom of maturer years, perverted into cunning and deceit, is made subservient to fortune or to ambition, which, with an increase of care, bring an increase of misery. Old age, stripped of the ardour and energy of preceding periods, still retains their vain opinions and perverse inclinations, and, if it catch at times a glimpse of immortality, and be convinced of the necessity of preparing for it, the road, which it must pursue for this purpose, appears too steep and rugged, and, perhaps, at the first step it makes in this road, it sinks into the grave.

Thus, most men proceed through the different stages of life, without acquiring that wisdom and virtue of which the whole of our present state is intended to be a school, as a preparation for a better. Although, in the uncorrupted nature of things, truth and solid happiness lie at no distance from us, nevertheless, partly by the illusions of our own minds, and partly by the absurdity and profligacy of others, a powerful barrier is placed between them and us, which it requires the courage of a hero and the strength of a giant to surmount.

Two grand objects occupy the attention and the activity of all mankind—the acquirement of good, and the removal of evil. But what are the enjoyments pursued? Frivolous and insignificant pleasures, which either afford no satisfaction deserving that name, or, at least, one infinitely small in comparison of that happiness for which the soul of man is formed. This, consisting in the improvement of the understanding, in the practice of virtue, and in the consolations and supports of religion, is either unknown or neglected. What are the evils most abhorred and avoided? Imaginary objects of terror, or those inconveniences which affect only our external circumstances. But the real evils of human nature, ignorance, corruption, the divine displeasure, the danger of eternal punishment, are never seriously apprehended, or considered as secondary causes of anxiety.

The most melancholy reflection of all is, that the very education, which the generality of mankind receive, serves frequently to confirm them in error, and to lead them to disastrous conduct. In matters of mere speculation, how often are theories substituted in the room of discoveries, and fancy, in that of knowledge! How often are unmeaning words, and unintelligible jargon, vented for just explanations of the natures and causes of things! Moral instruction is, of all, most neglected. The greater part of men are allowed to collect their notions of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, of the part they are bound to act in life, and of the course they ought to avoid, wherever they can find them. They seek them, accordingly, in the sentiments of the world, in the practice of their associates, in the dictates of their own passions, in the example that is set before them, by those on whom they depend, which is frequently an exhibition of selfishness and profligacy. *Craft* is denominated *wisdom; austerity, temperance; avarice, frugality; duplicity, prudence.* Even in matters relating to religion, when religion is at all attended to, bigotry, enthusiasm, or superstition, are clothed in the garb of that *godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Every virtue, and every pious feeling, are thus either removed from their proper place, or carried to criminal excess. In politics, what pernicious systems are often maintained under the most specious names! *Tyranny and oppression* are considered as *good government*; *anarchy and licentiousness* are embraced as *liberty*; and *blind attachment to party* is extolled as *patriotism.* In this manner, opinions the most absurd and pernicious are impressed on the mind, under the guise of salutary principles, and instruction itself and knowledge are employed to perpetuate ignorance and error.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES JULIUS WOOD, A.M.,
Newton-upon-Ayr.
SERMON by the Rev. DANIEL KELLY, A.M., Campbelton.

THE NAME OF GOD REVEALED BY HIMSELF;

A SERMON

By the Rev. JAMES JULIUS WOOD, A.M.,
Minister of Newton-upon-Ayr

"*And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.*"—EXODUS xxxiv. 6, 7.

WHEN the Israelites had, even in sight of the divine glory that rested on Sinai, made two golden calves, and rendered to them idolatrous worship, Moses twice interposed by prayer on their behalf, and each time the Lord graciously listened to his request. When the Lord threatened to destroy Israel, and offered to make of Moses a great people to inherit the blessings which Israel by rebellion had forfeited, Moses earnestly entreated for sparing mercy to his countrymen, and the Lord hearkened and spared them. He declared, that, in fulfilment of his promise and oath, he would put them in possession of the promised land—the land flowing with milk and honey; but he threatened to withhold from them any special blessing; he threatened not to go up with them, not to manifest himself as their God in the midst of them, but only to send his angel to guide them. Again Moses interceded with the Lord, and he said, "If thy presence go not up with me, carry us not up hence." And the Lord said unto Moses, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight."

Moses now found himself in circumstances particularly delightful. The Lord had listened to his supplications, and had taken the Israelites again into favour, and with his own voice had told his beloved servant that he had found grace in his sight. The soul of Moses, therefore, was gladdened with the joys of God; his heart overflowed with devout affection, and he longed, he panted for farther discoveries of Jehovah's glorious nature and character. It is ever thus with those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. What they have received of spiritual joys, only increases their desire of joys more enlarged and exquisite. What they have seen of the holy and glorious character of God, only makes them long for fuller and brighter manifestations of it. Emboldened by the Lord's kindness and condescension in lending a gracious ear to his intercessions on behalf of the Israelites, Moses ventured humbly to prefer a petition, expressive of the earnest desires of his heart, for still farther discoveries of the glorious Being with whom he was in communion. He said, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." He had already seen the bush burning in Horeb yet not consumed, and had heard the voice commanding to put the shoes from off his feet, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. He had

witnessed Sinai altogether on a smoke. because the Lord had descended upon it in fire, and thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and God speaking by a voice. He had lately seen "the God of Israel, and under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness"—a most resplendent manifestation of the divine presence in mildest glorious majesty, and under this manifested presence of the divinity the pure beautiful blue of a tranquil sky. But it seems to have been a display of the divine glory different from any of these that Moses besought the Lord to show him—perhaps something of the glory of his character, as well as an external visible glory; for we find, that when the Lord intimated that he would comply with the devout desire of his servant, he said to him, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." No visible manifestation of the divine glory could convey an adequate knowledge of the perfections of the divine character; and therefore the Lord declared, that whilst the visible display of the divine glory was passing before Moses, he would himself proclaim the name of the Lord: "And he said, Thou canst not see my face"—the whole glory of the manifested divinity—"for there shall no man see me and live"—the full revelation of the Godhead would be utterly insupportable by any human being. "And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by"—interpose something between thee and my brightest glory—"and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts"—some inferior manifestations of my glory, such as thou canst bear—"but my face, my brightest manifestation, shall not be seen."

Our text contains the record of the fulfilment of this promise of the Lord. At the Lord's commandment, Moses was ready in the morning with two tables of stone in his hands to go up to the top of the mountain. And when he had gone up, "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

Here, then, we have the Lord's name proclaimed by himself. A name is that which distinguishes one person or thing from another person or thing; and the name of the Lord here proclaimed by himself points out the distinguishing things in his nature and character. Spirit of God, give us with all truth and reverence to consider this glorious name!

1. We find that, first in order, the Lord proclaimed himself to be *The Lord, the Lord God.* In all instances where the word *Lord* in your Bible is printed in capital letters, it is the same word in the original, which is often translated Jehovah. This is the incommunicable name of God, the name which is peculiar to the Supreme Being, and never given to any other being whatsoever. "Thou," says the Psalmist, "whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." Ps. lxxxiii. 18. The name Jehovah literally signifies *He that exists;* and, in proclaiming his name to be Jehovah, God declares his self-existence, his eternity, his unchangeableness. From all eternity he has been the great *I AM*, and the *I AM* he will continue to all eternity—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But you observe that the name God is added; it is the Lord, the Lord *God.* The word in the original, which is here translated *God*, conveys the notion of something that is present every where; and we believe that the name *God* is here added to denote the omnipresence of the Deity, to teach us that he is every where throughout the universe. And since God, an intelligent being, cannot be present in any place without knowing what is going on in that place, the omnipresence of the Deity involves in it also his omniscience—his knowledge of all things; so that when the glory of the Lord passed by before Moses, and the Lord proclaimed his own name, "The Lord, the Lord God," he declared to his creatures that he was the self-existent, eternal, unchangeable, omnipresent, omniscient God. This Lord, this Lord God is thy God and thy friend whom thou lovest, O Christian! This Lord, this Lord God, is thy God against whom thou art in rebellion, O careless, unconverted sinner!

2. In the second place, you find it proclaimed that the Lord God is *merciful.* Mercy is an attribute of the divine character brought into exercise through the entrance

of sin into the world; for it is the refraining from punishing, or the pardoning one whom strict justice says ought to be punished. Contemplating God simply in the character of a just and holy Lawgiver, and man as the rebellious transgressor of God's law, how awful, how hopeless the condition of man! He has incurred the penalty; can he resist the execution of it? Can he, a worm of the dust, refuse to go hence at the bidding of the Lord, even though the command be to go away to everlasting burnings? Or can he hide himself from the presence of the Lord, so that the arm of justice shall not find him out? Or can any deliver him out of God's hand? My friends, when man became a sinner, he came into a state of enmity and rebellion against God, bringing after it a punishment from which no created intelligence could deliver him, or see how he could possibly escape; for the law that was given was strict and peremptory; it enjoined obedience, perfect obedience, and annexed an awful penalty to transgression: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." That the justice of God should yield something of the strictness of its demands, that it should fall from its glorious perfectness, was utterly impossible; so that when man had come into transgression, he could have nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment—a fearful looking for the execution of the penalty, ay, and until God gave some intimations of the glorious plan that he had devised for man's redemption. But when we find him, as in the text, proclaiming his name to be the Lord, the Lord God *merciful*, then we are enabled to regard him in a new light; the hope of pardon springs up in our souls, despair relaxes its cold, deadening grasp upon us, and a barrier between us and salvation, hitherto deemed insurmountable, is removed. Even though we had no fuller revelation of God's purposes concerning man than what is contained in the text, this would be the effect which it would produce; for though God here proclaims himself to be the self-existent, unchangeable, omniscient Jehovah, yet as he also proclaims himself to be merciful, we might rest assured, that in his infinite wisdom he would find out a way for the exercise of his mercy in perfect consistency with his unchangeableness, even though he had not told us what that way was. When, therefore, you have it proclaimed by Jehovah's own mouth that he is a merciful Lord God, tell me, O fellow-sinners, is not this a precious announcement to us? Oh! what a load it takes off one's spirit to have it declared by the Lord himself that he is merciful; that he has not cast off our world to suffer its merited punishment; that there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, loved, sought unto! Yes, we are sure that he is merciful, since the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and this is the foundation of our comfort.

3. In the third place, Jehovah proclaimed himself to be the Lord God *gracious*. Mercy refers chiefly to remitting punishment that is merited; grace to bestowing positive benefits, and favours that are unmerited. When, therefore, the Lord proclaims himself to be gracious, as well as merciful, he proclaims that he is not only willing to remit the punishment that man as a sinner deserves, but to bestow benefits on man, to show him kindness, to do him good, to which he has no claim at all. The Lord declares that he is gracious, full of kind purposes, freely to bless sinners who have deserved nothing from him but hottest displeasure. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, Jehovah who pardons sinners, and bestows on those whom he pardons benefits which they do not merit; yes, he is indeed gracious. Oh! when we contemplate ourselves dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, and heirs of hell, how joygiving to our hearts ought to be the Lord's proclamation concerning himself, that he is the Lord God, merciful and gracious; that, forgiving transgression, he confers on pardoned sinners good things, not according to what they deserve, (no, indeed,) but according to the inexhaustible riches of his free grace! In my low lost worthless estate, can any thing be more delightful to my soul than this?—to know, on the express word of God himself, that my sinfulness is no hinderance to my being pardoned; my worthlessness and want of desert no hinderance to my being an object of God's grace; to my receiving benefits from him; to his bestowing upon me all the treasures of his love, and beautifying me with his holiness, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

4. In the fourth place, the Lord proclaimed himself to be the Lord God, *long-suffering*. The long-suffering of God is his patient bearing with the sins of the world, and the insults that are offered to his divine majesty; his forbearing to execute deserved punishment on the wicked, and his still waiting to be gracious. There are many things that may convince us that the great God is thus long-suffering. Look at

the world in which we dwell. What a scene does it present to the thinking mind! How many millions of our race are giving to idols that worship and glory which are due to Jehovah alone, denying the God who made and who constantly preserves them! What horrid cruelties and abominations are the idolatrous nations of the earth constantly committing in their idolatrous worship! Nor is the picture much brighter when you turn to the countries that have taken the christian name. What an immense mass of wickedness there is in our own land, famed as it is among men for gospel light and gospel liberty! Let your thoughts just rest on some particular spot of it; for instance London, the metropolis of the country, and think what is passing in that vast city at this moment. What utter forgetfulness of God has taken possession of thousands! what daring and open profanation of his name and day! what deeds of grossest sin are even now a-committing! what scenes are at this moment exhibiting in its thousand resorts and haunts of pollution and wickedness! And is not the very same thing true with regard to every city and town throughout the land? What sin is even now a-committing in the town in which we dwell? How many of our neighbours are at this moment thoughtless of God—some wandering in the fields; some wasting their time in idle conversation; some, it may be, in attending to their worldly occupations; and some in dissipation, debauchery, and gross acts of sin! And even in the assembled companies of worshippers, how much of sin does the eye of God discern! How many hypocrites, how many formalists, how many that have a name to live, and yet are dead! How many who sit before God as his people sit, and seem to hear as his people hear, but whose hearts are dark with unbelief, and who are actually engaged in the horrid attempt to impose upon God, and deceive and ruin their own souls! Just think of the sin that is committing this Sabbath-day over the face of our earth, in public, and private, and secret; in city, and town, and country; in all places! Oh! what a cry of transgression is going up to God! what a shout of defiance is bursting forth against him! what a polluted cloud of sin is resting on the face of the whole earth! And when it is remembered that this has been going on for thousands of years, what an impressive testimony is borne to the long-suffering of God, and how strikingly does the fact agree with the Lord's proclamation concerning himself in the text, that he is the Lord, the Lord God, long-suffering! Truly it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassion fails not. Is it not marvellous that the judgments of God have not long ago descended on our guilty world, and swept the rebel worms that dwell upon it into eternal perdition? Is it not passing wonderful that the red wrath of Jehovah is not manifested against the evil that is daily committed on the earth? What a glorious incomprehensible Being is the holy Lord God! Long, long-suffering! Yes, he is long-suffering. And why is he so? Just because he is waiting to be gracious. He bears with sinners, that he may win them to himself. He heaps forbearance upon forbearance, that he may shame sinners out of their rebellion. Oh! tell me, can any of you be so hardened as to persist in putting the long-suffering of the Lord to still farther trial? Is it not enough that you have lived years in resistance to the manifestations of his love; that he has borne with your neglect, your sins, your insults; that notwithstanding all your past thoughtlessness and iniquities, he is this day ready to be gracious? "Despisest thou, O man, the riches of the Lord's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Surely thou canst not think that this long-suffering is intended to encourage thee to a continuance in sinning. Remember this state of things cannot go on. The Lord will strive long, and long he has striven with sinners, but he will not strive for ever. He will suffer long; and, Oh! say, if long he has not suffered? but his long-suffering draweth to an end.

5. In the fifth place, the Lord proclaimed himself to be the Lord God, *abundant in goodness*. The Lord is good, and he doeth good. The earth is full of his goodness. How much happiness is dealt forth to the various tribes of living creatures that inhabit the air, the earth, and the waters—from the insects that flutter delighted in the sunbeam, to the huge lords of the forest and of the ocean! How much goodness does Jehovah show! how many benefits does he confer even on sinners, though they abuse them, and are most ungrateful for them! Even in the darkest and wickedest times, God never left himself without a witness of his abundant goodness, in that "he did good, and gave rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling the hearts of men with food and gladness." "The Lord maketh

his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." You cannot look around you without perceiving that the Lord is abundant in goodness. "He hath set a bound to the waters of the ocean, that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth. He sendeth the springs into the valleys that run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field. By them the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. He maketh darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening. The earth is full of the Lord's riches; so also is the great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. These wait all upon the Lord, that he may give them their meat in due season. That he giveth them they gather: he opens his hand, they are filled with good." Ps. civ.

Say now if the works and the word of the Lord do not correspond?—if, when you see the goodness of the Lord spread throughout all his creation, and every day passing before you, you do not feel it to be just the fulfilment of that which was proclaimed before Moses on Sinai, "The Lord God, abundant in goodness?"

And if the goodness of God is thus so abundantly displayed in the works of creation and providence, what shall we say regarding its manifestation in the great work of redemption? Is not the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ abundant in goodness? Do we not see in the scheme of redemption devised and carried on by Jehovah treasures of goodness that overwhelm our minds with wonder? For in this you have a goodness that no guilt has been able to turn away from our world; that no oceans of ingratitude have been able to extinguish. Is not the Lord of redemption abundant in goodness? And will your hard and unbelieving hearts resist it all? Will you perish in despite of this abundant goodness; perish in the midst of a free and a full salvation; sink into perdition with the goodness of God trying every avenue to your hearts; trying to soften and to win you, by exhibiting itself to you in a thousand forms, as indeed a most abundant goodness?

6. In the sixth place, the Lord proclaimed himself to be *abundant in truth*. That Jehovah is a true God; that with him there is neither error nor deceitfulness, is admitted in the abstract by all. Yet there are some of those even who profess to be, and who, we trust, actually are the people of God, who act in certain instances as if they questioned the truth of God; as if they doubted whether he really meant according to his declaration. We need not say to you that this is utterly wrong. The things that he reveals are true; the things that we could never have discovered by our own unaided reason, and which he has made known to us by his word. It is true, that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God; that God "looked down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God;" and that he has declared, that "every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." It is true, that, notwithstanding this utter apostasy and sinfulness, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." It is true, that "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." It is true, ye sinners, that God has declared, that "he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil;" and that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Yea, every doctrine that he reveals is wholly and infallibly true. You may receive and rest upon it as such. If you doubt it in any degree, you make God a liar.

Turn next to his promises. These are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. In whatever he promises, the Lord is faithful to perform. He saith, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass: I have purposed

it, I will also even do it." Listen to the promises of God: "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you: I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death." "O death! I will be thy plagues; O grave! I will be thy destruction. Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise." "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out the dead." "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. Then the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

These are a few, a very few, of the promises graciously given to us by God; for the whole Bible is full of promises. And these are all perfectly true; they will all be faithfully performed; for He who hath given them is abundant in truth. In all that he promises the Lord is perfectly sincere. He intends just what he says. He speaks of things that really are, and just as they are. And yet, christian friends, how little do we enjoy these promises? Say, are they the daily food of your souls? Say, if you do not rather act as if you questioned the sincerity of God in making them, as if you doubted his faithfulness in fulfilling what he has spoken? But, surely, our God is abundant in truth. You believe this in general terms, but carry your belief away to every, the most minute particular. What he has revealed is wholly true; what he says he means; what he has promised that he will perform. Cast off your unbelief, then, one and all of you. Remember with whom ye have to do—a God of perfect, immutable truth.

7. In the seventh place, the Lord proclaimed himself to be the Lord God, *keeping mercy for thousands.* Already he had proclaimed himself to be merciful. That referred to his disposition of mind; *keeping mercy for thousands*, refers to the manner and degree in which this disposition is brought into exercise. It is no stinted mercy that God exercises towards the children of men. It extends to thousands, or, as it is expressed by the inspired John, to a great multitude, whom no man can number. The first letter of the word translated *keeping*, is considerably larger than the others; and this, the Jewish writers tell us, intimates that there is a particular emphasis laid on that word, as if it taught us that the Lord God proclaimed himself to be the great repository and fountain of mercy, continually showing mercy, in all its various exercises, to thousands of sinners, yet keeping inexhaustible stores of it for thousands more; pardoning those who trust in his mercy through Jesus Christ just now, and keeping mercy to pardon the sins which, through infirmity of the flesh and the remains of indwelling corruption, they may afterwards commit; for, though the child of God hates all sin, and would most gladly be completely delivered from it, he is quite aware, that whilst he is in the world, he will be guilty of transgressions of the divine law. But having been adopted into the family of heaven, he believes on the authority of his heavenly Father himself, that his heavenly Father keepeth mercy; that in mercy he will deal with him a wayward child, correcting, but not casting off; and that, therefore, he can go to God with all holy reverence and confidence, for mercy to pardon, and grace to help in time of need.

And then, from the rich treasures of his mercy, God deals it out to thousands; and when thousands have received it, still it is not exhausted; for the Lord keepeth mercy to bestow on thousands more. It is not as

if the Lord God thought that he had done enough; it is not as if his mercy was worn out by pardoning so many unworthy beings; but it is, that after all the pardons that he has granted, he still keepeth mercy for more, on even to the time of the end. Yes, my friends, the Lord's thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are the Lord's ways as our ways. In the midst of deserved wrath, he hath remembered mercy. But let it not afford encouragement to any of you in sinning, that you have to do with a God who keepeth merey for thousands. We shall by and by see, that though he doth this, yet he will by no means clear the guilty. The abundant mercy of God ought rather to lead you to repentance; for, surely, nothing should tend so much to make us desist from injurious conduct towards any one as the injured person's continued kindness to us, and his continued willingness to forgive all the evil that we have done to him. And, remember, that if you perish, whilst it is a truth that the Lord God keepeth merey for thousands, you perish in a ruin most just and terrible.

8. In the eighth place, the Lord God proclaimeth himself as a God *who forgiveth iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* Iniquity, and transgression, and sin: these words have different shades of meaning, as must be apparent to every one who is accustomed to accuraey of language. What were the ideas that the Holy Ghost intended to convey by them, we may best learn by a reference to the original. The word rendered *iniquities*, conveys the idea of being *perverted* or *turned aside*, and may probably refer to man's natural state now, in which he is perverted or turned aside from his original state of innoceney. The word rendered *transgression*, means a *trespassing* or *passing over* some law or rule laid down for the regulation of our conduct, and, therefore, plainly refers to our actual transgressions of the law of God. And the word rendered *sin*, means *deviation*, *erring*, or *wandering* from the law of God, and seems intended to denote generally all sin—every thing which is a want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God. But whether we be right or not in thus attempting to point out the different significations of these three words, we think there can be no doubt but that they are used for the purpose of intimating to us that God forgives sins of all kinds. Whether you have omitted duty, or transgressed the divine law; whether you have offended in secret or in public; whether your sins are more heinous or less heinous, none of them place you out of the reach of that forgiveness which is with God. To sins of every description and every character his forgiveness extends; so that if there be now hearing me any one convinced trembling sinner who thinks that he is so bad that God cannot forgive him; that he has lived so long in iniquity, and been for such a length of time acting in a manner most offensive in God's sight, let him take comfort now in turning to the Lord, in the assured truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sins; and though his sins be very many and very aggravated, the forgiveness that is with God through Christ can reach to them all.

But is this proclamation of abounding forgiveness to encourage any of you to continue in sin? No, assuredly; for, in the ninth place, the Lord proclaimed himself to be the Lord God, who would *by no means clear the guilty.* Now, who are the guilty? Certainly it does not here simply mean sinners—all who have offended against the divine law. If these were the persons whom God did not clear, then we must all be condemned. The whole human race must sink under his wrath and curse. But in that glorious name which he proclaimed to Moses, and which we have been considering, "the Lord declared himself to be merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." It cannot, therefore, be simply those who have committed sin, who are here denominated the guilty, and whom the Lord will by no means clear. But it is those who continue impenitent. Through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ a way is made for the exercise of God's forgiveness. The Holy Spirit, given through Christ, having touched the sinner's heart, and enlightened his understanding, he sees God as a sin-pardoning God in the Redeemer. He acts faith in God's testimony concerning his Son, becomes thus an object of his forgiveness, and is justified freely by his grace. Being justified, the sinner is no more guilty, but righteous in God's sight. He is now not numbered with the guilty whom God declares he will not clear, being a justified person. But the guilty are those who remain in their natural state of unbelief, who have not truly repented, who have not acted faith on the Son of God, and thus received the remission of their sins. These the Lord God will by no means clear, but the punishment of their iniquities will come upon them.

Such, then, is this glorious name of the Lord proclaimed by himself, and he knows his own character, and must have revealed it aright. There are three things in this name of the Lord, from fixing our attention on which we may derive benefit.

In the first place, it gives us a more exalted notion of the nature of God when he proclaims himself to be *the Lord, the Lord God.* We have already stated that the name, *the Lord* or *Jehovah*, denotes the self-existence, eternity, and unchangeableness of the Supreme Being, and that the name *God* denotes his omnipresence and omniscience. Far back in the ages of eternity, there was a period when there was no existence but God himself—when Jehovah dwelt alone. There was no earth and no heaven, no men and no angels; in the solitude of the universe the Deity reposed, even then the JEHOVAH, the I AM. How our minds are lost, overwhelmed when we give ourselves up to contemplate this God! His self-existence, his eternity, how unfathomable! Without beginning, in the vast untravelled depths of eternity, dwelling solitary! And still he is the same, the unchangeable God, possessed of the same nature, the same attributes, as when there was no being but himself; nothing added, nothing subtracted, but the glories of his character now manifested to the intelligent beings that he has called into existence. How glorious, indeed, is the Deity, not only existing from all eternity, but pervading all space, every where present throughout the universe. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it." What is the greatest, the most glorious of created intelligences when compared with him who existed before all creation? All that they have, they have received; their existence, their glories were all bestowed on them by Jehovah. But Jehovah owes nothing to any one; he is the original, uncreated, inexhaustible fountain of life and of glory, himself most glorious. And this Lord God is our God. We were formed by his hand, and we exist by the constant exercise of his power. With what holy reverence should we regard him, and how often and how solemnly should we call to mind the remembrance of his greatness! What a glorious object of our praises, of our adorations! His eye is upon us; he is present with us. "Great and glorious art thou, Lord God Almighty. Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou art God alone."

Secondly. The view of the divine character given in this proclaimed name of the Lord, is peculiarly suited to our condition as sinners; and especially does it meet the wants and feelings of one who is weary and heavy laden with sin; of one who has been led to see the evil and the danger of that iniquity of which he has been guilty. When the Spirit of God has begun to act upon the soul, and scatter light through the darkness that had previously enveloped it, what strange deformities start up before the startled mind! A life, a long life it may be, spent in rebellion against God, in heedlessness of his wrath or his favour; sins indulged in without remorse; ordinances neglected or not improved; a contented resting in a form of godliness, as if all was well; whilst wrath and condemnation alone were overhanging it—these things present themselves with alarming vividness and power to the awakened soul. Are there any such souls now hearing me? Let me ask, if it does not bring relief to their fears, to hear it proclaimed by the Lord God himself that he is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin? What do they want that is not here contained? Here is long-suffering to meet your long-continued course of transgressions; here is mercy to pardon your iniquities; here is abundant grace and goodness to supply whatever you require for your happiness; and here, as that which binds all together, is abundant truth, precluding all doubt about there being in him those gracious dispositions towards sinners of mankind which he here reveals. What then, we again ask, O mourning, restless souls, do you want that is not here contained? Why are ye cast down? why are ye disquieted? why should you despair? Has not the Lord God proclaimed himself to be every thing that you could wish? Think upon this glorious name of his, and be not faithless, but believing.

In the third place, from this subject there comes a warning to the wicked. The Lord hath declared that he will by no means clear the guilty—those who continue in their sins, without faith and repentance. All those dispositions of Jehovah which afford so much comfort to the humble, believing penitent, have no reference whatever to those who live on in hardened indifference and sin; unless it be this, that the revelation of such gracious dispositions in God exhibits their sinfulness as very hardened,

and renders them wholly inexcusable. The abundant goodness of God, his mercy, all the forgiveness that exists in his nature, even his long-suffering, do not secure impunity to the impenitent. The Lord God will by no means clear the guilty. What, then, is thy hope, and where is thy refuge, O thoughtless, unhumbled sinner, since Jehovah declares against thee? It surely cannot be in any part of this glorious name here proclaimed by him. I know that thou talkest of the mercy of God; but let me ask, Who are the objects of God's mercy? Are they those who obstinately continue in their sins—those who are here called the guilty? Are they, in short, such as thou art, unhumbled, unconverted, unbelieving man? Thinkest thou that even what thou callest the mercy of God will save such from hell, they dying in their sins? Thou canst not, thou darest not think so; for Jehovah proclaimed it from his own mouth, and has recorded it in the Bible that lies before thee, that he will by no means clear the guilty. In this proclamation of his glorious name, Jehovah teaches thee that he knows how to punish, as well as how to pardon—to punish consistently with the glory of his mercy, as well as to pardon consistently with his justice and holiness. There is a refuge for thee in the Lord, the Lord God, if thou will but turn unto him with all thy heart, and receive as a free gift his freely offered salvation; if, through faith and repentance, thou seekest forgiveness and holiness. And, oh! thy time is speeding on; thy day of grace is drawing to an end; and the Lord pardons none of those over whom the grave has closed. They have then passed beyond the reach of his mercy, his forgiveness, his long-suffering, and even his abundant goodness. Remember that it is the God of truth who has said, "I will by no means clear the guilty."

CONNEXION BETWEEN HOLY OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD, AND THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN;

A SERMON PREACHED IN CASTLE HILL CHURCH OF CAMPBELTON, 23d MARCH, 1834.

By the Rev. DANIEL KELLY, A.M.,
One of the Ministers of Campbelton.

"*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*"—MATT. vii. 21.

WHEN the Son of God came down from Heaven, he appeared to the inhabitants of the land of Judea, such as he had been described in the beautiful inspired language of ancient prophecy, "distinguished above measure with the gifts of the divine Spirit, anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to publish liberty to the captives, to comfort the mourners in Zion, and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Whilst we consider with attention what manner of person Jesus was, the astonishing display of God-like power visible in the works which he performed, the inimitable grandeur and simplicity which shone forth in all his instructions, we shall not be surprised that convictions of his Divinity flashed on the minds of men, and that great multitudes flocked to him from every quarter during his abode in Galilee; perceiving himself surrounded by a numerous assembly, he embraced the opportunity of delivering in their hearing a sermon of peculiar extent, of unparalleled excellence, and unspeakable importance, in which he announced the design of his coming, and the spiritual nature of that kingdom which he was about to establish on earth. In the commencement of this discourse, he draws a grand and beautiful outline of those features of character which should distinguish from the rest of the world the subjects of this divine kingdom; and with the dignity of one who had authority, pronounces upon each of them the blessing of heaven. With the most impressive solemnity of sentiment, he then explains the nature, spirituality, and everlasting obligation of the precepts of the moral law, "I am come not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them." He exposes the falsity of those adventitious comments by which their true meaning had been so miserably perverted by the Scribes and Pharisees of the Jewish nation, and inculcates towards the conclusion of this chapter, the necessity of universal obedience to the divine law, as the only evidence which can be exhibited of the sincerity of our religious faith, "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit; every tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire;" and then, in the words which form the subject of the present discourse, he adds, "not every one that saith unto

me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." This subject, therefore, naturally divides itself into the two following branches, which I shall endeavour shortly to illustrate.

I. Description of the character of those who make an external profession of religion, but walk unworthy of its precepts, connected with the impossibility of their entering in such a state into the kingdom of Heaven

II. The connexion between the character of those who profess religion and adorn it by a suitable conversation, with the reward which is held out for their encouragement in the words of the text; and,

Lastly, Conclude the subject with a short improvement.

It will easily appear, before we proceed further, that the text has no direct allusion to those who neither practise nor profess religion, but seems to address itself particularly to persons who bear a somewhat superior character to the openly careless and profane. It is evident, 1st, from even an imperfect observation of human life, that a person may have much which bears the semblance of piety, while he is far from feeling its genuine influence. A variety of causes may induce him to adhere apparently to a form of godliness, whilst he is completely destitute of that power which is so essentially necessary to enable him to perform, in an acceptable manner, the several duties which he owes to his God, to his neighbour, and to himself, from views wholly secular and selfish, from a regard to his worldly reputation, the habits of early life, the customs of moral order in the circle which includes his person and family, from interest, and a view to his aggrandizement in life, and many other causes of expediency such as these; he may profess his belief in the established religion of his country, and attend to the performance of the ceremonial rites by which it may be characterized. Mankind, indeed, in all ages and nations, have been too much disposed to flatter themselves with hopes of the divine favour and approbation, on account of their punctilious observance of certain positive institutions, and of their making a public and solemn profession of their faith in the great and fundamental doctrines of their peculiar systems, whilst with astonishing inconsistency, they neglect considering that these things, however commendable as expressive of a ready obedience to the Supreme Governor of the Universe, are not to be depended on any farther than as they are means only to enable us to arrive at the attainment of a most important end, a virtuous, a holy, and a happy life. Though the Christian faith has been received by so great a proportion of the inhabitants of the world, though the light of the sun of righteousness has so greatly dispelled the darkness of superstition and the practice of idolatry, yet to what a wide extended class of human beings may not the preceding observations be found justly and lamentably applicable. Our blessed Saviour, in a well known parable, has occasion to address himself to persons of this description. The seed is sown among thorns; for the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches impede its growth. Overwhelmed with the business of life, devoted to the pursuit of frivolous amusements, immersed in the abysses of sensuality, and elated with the charms of secular ambition, the men of the world seldom think of the dreadful responsibility connected with immortal beings hastening to the invisible world, but grasp at the things of a moment with the infatuated eagerness of creatures destined to spend eternity in such a world as this. Their minds are full of impure desires, their hearts of debasing passions: they are, in a word, completely unqualified for the enjoyment of the pure spiritual pleasures revealed in the everlasting gospel for the encouragement of those who not only profess Christianity, but do the will of their Father who is in heaven. 2d. To descend more particularly, there is another and a numerous class to whom the words of the text may appear more particularly directed. I mean the lukewarm and indifferent. Failing in duty from principle, they dwell in the tent which they have erected, secured against the feelings of remorse and the apprehension of divine displeasure. Whatever a person, characterized by such dispositions of mind, endeavours to perform in religion, however small or lifeless, he considers as sufficient for his purpose, he concludes every thing beyond it to be lost labour. He contradicts no received opinion. He is guilty of no scandalous sin. He abandons no public ordinance. He questions not the propriety of what he is taught. Nothing uncommonly criminal can be laid to his charge by the world. He is, in his own eyes, blameless before men, and justified in the sight of God. Here his religion ends. It never goes beyond the surface, it never penetrates into the heart; it lies on the hard beaten highway. The character and disposition of such persons with respect to Christianity, is precisely that of

the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, arising from indifference and timidity, and the want of firmness in the Christian cause, against which temper our Saviour expresses so great an aversion. To suppose, therefore, that mere outward professions or cold forms of devotion will be accepted by the searcher of hearts in the room of those internal qualities, and that undissembled worship which are the consequences of evangelical faith, and constitute the very essence of godliness, or that a vain oblation will be as acceptable to heaven as sincere devotion, is a chimerical and most presumptuous thought, "for in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." But in the 3d place, There is another class of men whom we shall mention last, who differ a little from those whose characters we have endeavoured already to describe. We refer to those temporizing professors of Christianity, who are not destitute of the shadow of good and imposing qualities, who profess religious sentiments, feelings, and purposes, who not only hear instruction, but do many actions which may be pronounced virtuous, are neither profligate nor profane, nor opposers of that which is good. While some men's sins go before any inquiry, and proclaim loudly as on house-tops what they really are, the sins and defects of hypocritical professors of Christianity follow after a nearer inspection. They have promising symptoms. They have fair and agreeable features. But there are some secret and presumptuous sins by which they are easily beset. But still they see the necessity of doing something to promote the interests of piety and virtue. They would shudder to think, that they are walking in the broad way which leads down to the chambers of death. But their minds are blinded by the god of this world. Their hearts are at ease in Zion. When they would attempt to recommend the necessity of regard to religion in principle and practice, they not unaptly resemble the conduct of Judas Iscariot, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; who, though he might be instrumental to melt and mould the hearts of those around him, his own at the same time continued to preserve its native incorrigibility and concealed impiety. How can such men enjoy the blessed satisfaction of a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; for with them faith is a barren tree, never producing the fruits of holiness? It is a body without a soul; it is a dead faith which cannot save. Would such characters examine themselves by the light of the Word of God, how soon might they perceive that notwithstanding all their prepossessing appearances, their hearts are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Were their minds properly awakened to entertain scriptural ideas, respecting the character of God as the moral Governor of the world, and of the dreadful nature of sin as direct rebellion against the Majesty of his laws, how would they startle with horror at the sight of that gulf of perdition over which they are suspended! Many sins, which they generally considered as trifling and incidental to the imbecility of human nature, would appear in terrific array, drawing down the wrath of an offended God on their guilty heads. These impure and criminal passions, which are hid from public view, lurking secretly in the folds of a corrupted self-deceiving heart, an impartial review would lay open the fatal consequences of indulging them with such fatal gratification. How inconsistent would the most of their secret thoughts, desires, and passions appear, when compared with the pure and heavenly precepts of the Christian faith! They would find their pretended devotion not unfrequently to be a solemn mockery of heaven; their virtue, ostentation; their zeal, spiritual pride; and their charity, a composition for their guilt. What a group of hideous deformed objects would rise up to their astonished view! a distorted understanding; a lacerated conscience; an heart tinged with impurity, callous and unfeeling of another's wo, and sickening at the sight of another's happiness; promises and engagements made at the sacred altar violated upon the slightest temptation; vain subterfuges to excuse or palliate their own failings, with an uncandid and rigorous construction of the failings of others; the divine substance of religion changed into an empty unlovely form, rather adapted to disfigure the image of God in the human soul, than to purify and perfect it for the enjoyment of immortal happiness in the heavenly world. How suitable to their situation and character is the question and prayer of the inspired psalmist of Israel? "Who can understand his errors, cleanse thou me from secret faults; let them not have dominion over me." To conclude, then, this part of the subject, we may sum up what has been already said by remarking, that in so far as men do not cultivate the whole assemblage of Christian virtues, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, they evince not the power of faith,

out the power of unbelief; in other words, not the spirit of the Gospel, but a spirit directly opposed to it, the spirit of infidelity. Whoever thinks to justify his incredulity by showing a man who, to a profession of Christianity, adds a life of crime, the indignant Gospel tears the mask from his face and exposes to view his features in their detested colours. Whatever be his profession, we disown his kindred, he acts wickedly, not because he is a Christian, but because he is not a Christian. His crimes conspire with his hypocrisy to prove him an infidel, "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." "The pure in heart only shall see God." "Those who by a patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, immortality, and everlasting life." "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear." We may clearly see how far short all the pretensions upon which such persons build their hopes of salvation, will come of acceptance in the great day of judgment. Their hopes are built on a foundation of sand, and the hail from the forest shall soon sweep away every refuge of lies. If Jesus Christ should accept of such unregenerated men, in the day of final retribution, he must act contrary to all the declarations and threatenings of the gospel, "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall fall upon every soul of man that doth evil, without respect of persons." If Jesus Christ should accept of the hypocritical services of such characters, he must act contrary to the whole tenor of the Gospel, renew and change their nature in a future state, and by a miraculous operation of divine power, make them holy in order to their being happy. Such a decision of the case is impossible in the very nature of things; because all those pretensions, on which careless, indifferent, and nominal professors of Christianity found their expectations of happiness, are in reality so many arguments against them, and so many aggravations of their crimes; "As the tree falleth so must it lie." "What communion hath light with darkness, and sin with holiness?" "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for those who, though favoured with the light of the Gospel, have walked in darkness.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Sermon by the Rev. Daniel Kelly, Campbelton.
Sermon by the Rev. Alexander Fleming, Neilston.

CONNEXION BETWEEN HOLY OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD, AND THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN;

A Sermon by the Rev. Daniel Kelly, A.M.—*Concluded.*

Having offered these few observations upon the character of nominal professors of religion, let us now very shortly attend, under the second head of discourse, to the connexion between the character of those who not only profess Christianity, but adorn it by a suitable conversation, with the reward which is held out for their encouragement in the text. "They are not only hearers of the word, but doers also;" to them our blessed Saviour holds out the animating prospect of enjoying eternal felicity in the kingdom of heaven. It is, therefore, with the highest pleasure that we are led to contemplate the character of those who, whilst they say, Lord, Lord, do the will of their heavenly Father. 1. The will of God is a term of vast extent. It comprehends the whole of what the Supreme Being hath been pleased to reveal as our duty to him, our brethren of mankind, and to ourselves. Though the light of reason reveals so much of the divine law, as to leave men wholly inexcusable, yet if we would know and perform our Creator's will, we must search the Sacred Scriptures, where it is minutely and perfectly described; where our obedience is demanded by the most powerful motives, and the consequences of transgression enforced by the most tremendous sanctions. Let us remember with an awful impression of solemnity stamped upon our minds, that the will of God, comprehended in the ten commandments, is a transcript of his moral perfections, like its divine author, holy, just, and good, spiritual, immutable, and everlasting; by our apostasy from the living God, we have transgressed, and are daily transgressing the precepts of the moral law in thought, word and deed; but by the gracious interposition of a Saviour, all sincere believing penitents are placed under a new dispensation of mercy, revealed in the glorious gospel of the Son of God. His perfect righteousness has *magnified* divine justice, and fulfilled the utmost extent of all its demands, in the room of the guilty, perishing children of the human race. Receiving this righteousness by a living faith, they are united to Jesus Christ, and justified in the sight of the Most High. Through sanctification of the Spirit, they are enabled to put on the new man, which after God is created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. They become fruitful branches in Christ, the true and living vine. Their hearts are enlarged to run the way of the divine commandments; "Do we make void the law by faith?" says the apostle, "God forbid, yea, we establish *the law*.

2. It will be easy for us to see the connexion between the character of those who do the will of their Father who is in heaven, and the enlivening prospects of future blessedness which the Redeemer opens up to their view. They pursue that line of conduct both in principle and practice, which the word of God requires. They possess those graces of character which qualify them, through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, to an admission into the kingdom of heaven. They behold the Son of God set forth in the Gospel, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, in his various offices of prophet, priest, and king. Never, they are fully sensible, is he acknowledged in that character. Never can the gracious purposes of the Father respecting him be complied with, until every other ground of hope be abandoned, and constant dependence placed on him alone. "This is the command of God, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ. This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." This is a work which cannot be dispensed with; for without

it every other work will be vain and offensive. Sooner may we expect to weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, than expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven without fulfilling this most momentous command. This is truly to do the will of our heavenly Father. In doing this, sincere Christian believers lay the foundation of every virtue. This heavenly principle will communicate its salutary influence to all the springs and principles of our actions, and the light of their daily conversation will so shine before men, that they may see their good works and glorify their father which is in heaven. The habitual endeavour of their lives is to be characterized by those holy dispositions of mind, which fit them for the full enjoyment of the happiness connected with that blessed place. They love the Lord with all their heart, and soul, and mind. How different are they, in their spirit and temper, from those self-deceiving professors, who endeavour to serve both God and mammon. Instead of making an ostentatious parade of their attainments in religion, they are intent always on cultivating the internal beauties of holiness. Instead of hastily entertaining an assured confidence of the divine acceptance, they are conscious of the power of inherent depravity, and consequently jealous over themselves with a godly jealousy. They examine themselves with impartiality, whether they are truly in the faith; they examine themselves of their love to God and benevolence to man. Instead of being forward to boast of what they have done for the cause of Christ, they are ashamed of their best services, and ready rather to dread his displeasure for what they have omitted, than to claim his favour for any thing they have done. They are indeed surrounded by many and powerful temptations from the world, the devil, and the flesh. On some occasions they may and do relax from their accustomed vigilance against their attacks, but God will easily distinguish between the allowed sins of the most specious hypocrite, and the lamented failings of the weakest of his children. Whilst they tread temptation's fatal path, his grace will sustain them. Whilst distressed by the pressure of the body of sin and death, the Holy Spirit will assist their infirmities. "The Lord will deliver his people from every evil work, and preserve them unto his heavenly kingdom."

How inadequate must be the liveliest conceptions which our minds in this present state can attain respecting that kingdom, which has been prepared for the workers of righteousness from the foundation of the world. The representations given us in Scripture of this glorious place, the joys in which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, are expressed in language animated, striking and sublime. All the images which this world can afford, are employed to represent to us the honour, purity, and happiness in reserve for the people of God in that kingdom, and to raise our ideas of its excellence and glory. Glorious things are said of this city of the living God. It is represented as his place of inexhaustible glory. It is called the city of the great king; a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Into this place the Saviour is now entered, and is surrounded with angels and archangels, with the spirits of just men made perfect; and there all his redeemed shall be assembled, when their bodies shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. They who do the will of their father who is in heaven, who to their faith add virtue and piety, shall enter with everlasting joy upon their heads unto the city of the living God, unto mount Zion, the perfection of beauty, the palace of the Eternal King, the heavenly Jerusalem, there to join an innumerable company of angels, the General Assembly and Church of the first born whose names are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. But the kingdom of celestial felicity, which shall open wide its everlasting gates for their admission is the peculiar residence of the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity and the praises of Israel, the habitation of His holiness, the throne of His majesty, the place where his honour dwelleth. That house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, shall be the reward of those only who are holy in all manner of life and conversation. He that is inspired with these blessed hopes purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure, for no unclean thing shall enter within the walls of the New Jerusalem. None but such as are found doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God. The faithful, of whatever age or nation, rank or station, are the persons who shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; for they have been washed from all their sins in the blood of the Lamb, and become kings and priests unto God their Heavenly Father. At the eventfu

day of retribution, their bodies being raised from the dead shall be united to their glorified spirits. Their good works shall then be publicly proclaimed before assembled worlds, and shall, from the hands of Jesus, the Redeemer, the Righteous, receive the palm of victory, the robes of righteousness, and the crown of glory. Such are the elevated prospects, whose height and depth, and breadth and length, stretch with immeasurable extent before them into the boundless ages of eternity. Such will be the concluding scene of Providence, with respect to characters of such distinguished attainments. They only are truly blessed; for such is the wise and just appointment of the Most High. We may now easily see the connexion between the character of those who profess Christianity, and adorn it by a suitable conversation, with the reward which is held out for their encouragement in the words of the text. None but persons of this excellent character are qualified to enjoy the happiness here promised by our Lord. Were it possible to admit into the celestial paradise, an unregenerate man, however glorious the place, it would yield no enjoyment to him. Opposite to good in the temper of his mind, enmity against God in his disposition, opposed to the Redeemer in his soul, what enjoyment could the place or the company yield to him? The unsanctified sinner would in heaven be out of his element. A tenant of the deep on the summit of a rock, or a bird of the air in the depths of the sea, would not be so far removed from the condition in which nature would find enjoyment, as an unregenerated man within the gates of the New Jerusalem. Such a state of things is impossible. Justice will not permit the admission of the guilty to the fellowship of the righteous.

The divine Holiness prevents the introduction of a polluted sinner into that place where nothing impure can enter. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and sooner shall Satan succeed in scaling the high battlements of the celestial city, and in casting from their thrones of light its blessed inhabitants, than Jehovah receive into the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for the saints, any one who remains unrenewed, and under the dominion of the law of sin and death. There is no communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." What delight could it give to one who is an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works, to be admitted into the company of the friends of God? Could the envious, the malicious, the revengeful, live in the serene mansions of charity and of peace? Can folly dwell with wisdom, or falsehood with truth, or sin with holiness? No. What satisfaction could the lukewarm, worldly, nominal professor of religion enjoy amid the pure, active, spiritual pleasures of the heavenly world? How could that individual, who has devoted himself to the idolatry of covetousness, who has become a worshipper of mammon, an idolatrous admirer of shining dust, kindle that flame of divine love in his breast, which would expand itself in the celebration of the great Creator's praise? What exertions have the careless and indifferent ever made to promote the interests of pure and undefiled religion? Whereas the people of God, the constant study of whose lives it has been to do the will of their heavenly father, have almost in every age of the Church been called upon to offer up prayers and tears, anxieties and labours, even their honour, their fortune, and their blood; but alas! what have these men to offer who content themselves with pronouncing, Lord, Lord, whilst they do not do the things which he says? They have no love to excite them to make any sacrifice of their favourite passions; nor faith to induce them to encounter any difficulties for the sake of God and religion. And shall such persons receive a crown of righteousness—shall these share in the kingdom of Jesus—shall they partake in the triumph of the last day? It can never be. They do nothing worthy of the Gospel—nothing worthy of the Spirit of God—nothing that can entitle them to the blessings of the cross of Christ. Distress and anguish must take hold of the sinners in Zion, and fearfulness must seize upon the hypocrites. From the troubles and miseries of this life, they must go down into the everlasting torments of another. It will form no small aggravation of their punishment to fall into the gulf of misery, even from the expectation of happiness. We see, therefore, that none but the wise, the holy, the just, and the good, are fit to be admitted into the presence of the living God, and to abide there for evermore. "Happy is the people that is in such a case. Yea blessed is that people whose God is the Lord."

Application.—From this subject we may learn,

1st. That active obedience to the precepts of Christianity is the surest mark of a genuine Christian believer. As soon may

the husbandman expect an abundant harvest without improving the season of spring: as soon may the soldier expect that victory will present him with her palms without striking a single blow; as soon may the mariner expect to reach the destined shore without unfurling his sails to the propitious breeze of heaven, as the careless, lukewarm professor of Christianity expect to arrive at the kingdom of heaven without a life of active obedience to the holy precepts of the Christian faith.

The whole analogy of nature inculcates a very different lesson from this vain persuasion which is so fondly indulged by the generality of mankind in their spiritual concerns. We are surrounded with active agents—the sun, the moon, the stars of heaven. The whole planetary system, with the earth which we inhabit, are perpetually in motion, and unweariedly pursue those paths which have been ordained for them by the Father of Lights; and an active principle exerts itself, in preserving them amid their various revolutions, in order, harmony, and beauty. The varied year presents to our view the rolling of the seasons for the benefit of man. The sea, the air, the hail and storm, are also active instruments in the hands of the great Author of the universe, for fulfilling his purposes in the government of the world. "For bountiful as is the hand of Providence, its gifts are not so bestowed as to seduce us into indolence, but to rouse us to exertion; and no one expects to arrive at the height of learning, or arts, or power, or wealth, or military glory, without vigorous resolution, strenuous diligence, and steady perseverance." Yet we expect to become Christians without labour, study, and inquiry. This is the more preposterous, because Christianity being a revelation from God, and not the invention of man, discovering to us new relations with their correspondent duties, containing also doctrines, motives, and precepts peculiar to itself, we cannot reasonably expect to become proficients in it by the accidental intercourse of human life; as one might learn insensibly the manners of polished society, the maxims of worldly sagacity, or a scheme of mere morals. In one word, it is the sovereign and irresistible decree of that God with whom we have to do, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And the procedure of the day of judgment, may give us the most ample certainty that our works, whatever may be their quality, will, at that awful solemnity, fix our unalterable doom, Matthew, xxv. 31. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

2d. We see the necessity of unremitting endeavours, relying on the strength of divine grace to qualify us for admission into the heavenly world. "He that is not with me," says our Divine Master, "is against me." He commands us in the most explicit manner, to espouse his cause with cordiality, and support it with vigour. On what side, then, do we stand? Here are two leaders of opposite interests, never to be reconciled; and it is indispensably requisite that every individual show himself decidedly and actively for the one and against the other. Have we entered into the service of Jesus—are we with him sincerely without dissimulation, uniformly without wavering, and universally without reserve? this he demands. Those whose conduct is in other respects comparatively correct, but who reserve one favourite sin, which they habitually indulge, and suffer to bring them into captivity, if they would discharge this duty, must lay aside every weight, and let me press the duty of unreserved obedience on all such persons. Dismiss without delay the master passion of your breast. Burst its bands asunder, and cast all its cords from you. Destroy the idol to which your hearts have hitherto bowed, break down its groves, and burn them in the sacred fire of devotion. Pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand, and cast them from you, that ye may enter into life. Consider that if your Lord find you at his coming, wilfully and habitually offending in one point, in the breaking of one of the least of his commandments, he will charge you as guilty of all. He will account you a despiser of his authority, and a rebel to his government. Let the solemn warning in the text sink deep into every heart: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven.

THE MEANS BY WHICH THE WORLD ENDANGERS MAN'S SALVATION AND HOW FAITH OVERCOMES THE WORLD;

A SERMON.

By the Rev. ALEXANDER FLEMING,
Minister of Neilston.

"*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*"—1 JOHN v. 4.

THE christian life is not a state of ease and quiet, but of difficulty and danger. He who engages in the service of the Captain of our Salvation must commence a soldier, determined to support the honour, and to combat the enemy, both of his MASTER and of himself. The enemies of the Christian make inroads upon him from every quarter. Vigilance, therefore, must be exerted, and every grace and virtue kept awake to observe the motions, and guard against the attacks of those who attempt to destroy the power, and to retard the progress, of religion in the soul. Among the numerous and powerful enemies of a truly religious person, the world is peculiarly distinguished for zeal and activity. We shall, therefore, in the following discourse, consider,

I. What is implied in the term WORLD; and,

II. Endeavour to show how FAITH enables man to overcome the world.

1st. Then, let us consider what is implied in the term world. This term admits, in Scripture, of various significations. It is employed to describe those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; as, when it is said, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Sometimes it is applied to mankind in general; as when it is declared. "The Lord shall judge the world in righteousness, and administer judgment to the inhabitants of the earth." It also signifies the material and inanimate part of creation, as when the Almighty is represented "laying the foundations of the world; stretching out the heavens as a curtain; establishing the earth by his power; and casting forth his lightnings to enlighten the world."

But without proceeding farther in an enumeration of the various significations of the term world, we shall endeavour to ascertain the meaning which it bears in this part of the sacred writings. In the preceding part of this Epistle, the beloved Apostle declares, that "all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." By this passage, therefore, we are led to the discovery of the real meaning of the term, world, as used in this Epistle; and, therefore, viewing it in this light, it may be considered as implying "all those external circumstances, objects, and opiuions, which operate upon the mind; and, by their allurements and deceptions, endanger the faith, the virtue, and hopes of the true believers." Your attention, therefore, is requested, whilst I attempt to show by what means the *world* endangers man's salvation, And, first, it does this by—PROSPERITY.

When man is favoured with the smiles of fortune; when his heart is delighted with the joy of the present, and big with the hopes of the future, he is apt to become vain and haughty. As prosperity engenders pride, and furnishes man with the means of gratifying sensual desire, so opportunities of gratification are too frequently embraced. Hence that immorality of conduct, and its native attendant, that impiety of sentiment, which stain the lives and mark the characters of too many in prosperous circumstances. Hence, too, that debauchery and licentiousness of manners which, in too many instances, disturb, nay, destroy the peace of families, and contaminate the purest joys of social life.

Contempt of persons in the humbler walks of society, neglect of those whom poverty depresses, and ingratitude to God for the bounties of his providence, are some of the dangerous, and even criminal effects of prosperity. Absorbed in the contemplation of his own greatness and importance, man often becomes unmindful of his bountiful Benefactor; presumptuously imagining that by his *own* exertions, address, skill, or good fortune, he hath bettered his situation and increased his wealth, he recognises not the hand which has conducted him to riches, and honour, and power. By disregarding the duties of devotion to his Maker, and neglecting the practice of charity to his neighbours, he becomes a reproach to his nature as a man, and, as a Christian, to his religion, proves an unjust steward of the talents committed to his trust, and an ungrateful receiver of the divine blessings.

2d. The world endangers man's salvation by ADVERSITY. If prosperity elate, adversity depresses the mind. Both are fatal to our true interests; to yield to the assaults of the latter is, however, neither so criminal nor so unmanly as to become the dupe of the former.

Of all the trials in human life, adversity is the most severe and depressing, when it follows comfortable independence or elevated situation. When the clouds are gathering around us, and the face of the sky foreboding, the spirit of a man may seem fortified against the rising tempest. The first shocks he may bear with firmness, nay, support with magnanimity; but when the storm rages and lays waste, and all around is comfortless, forlorn, and dreary; when no scene of gladness, no prospect of comfort presents itself to view, the soul, even of the brave, fails within man, and melancholy darkens his mind. On the one hand, he is perhaps bereaved of the affectionate partner of his days; on the other, of his children, the promising blossoms of his future hopes. One misfortune deprives him of his property; another involves in ruin the affairs of him on whose friendship, in the hour of need, he could depend, and to whom with confidence he looked for aid. Earthly joys have failed, and earthly hopes have fled. The sources of terrestrial happiness are dried up, and he looks around in vain for consolation. Poverty and want, anxiety and distress, distract his mind, and wring with agony. He sees nothing but gloominess *in* the *present*, and darkness *in* the *future*. The remembrance of better days adds a new pang to his sufferings, and embitters his cup of present suffering.

In such a situation, the *unfortunate* are often unable to account for the severe dispensations of providence. When the way of the Lord is in the whirlwind, and his paths in the mighty waters, the eye of man cannot trace his footsteps, nor can the faculties of the human mind account for his operations. On such occasions, man is apt to distrust the goodness of God, if not to accuse his justice. The strokes of adversity overcome his firmness; the darkness that overhangs the present world is increased by the blackness of the rising clouds; and the pain of present distress is considered more acute by the approach of new trials, and the anticipations of unknown and dreaded calamity. In these circumstances, man sees not the hand of a parent correcting him, but the outstretched arm of an adversary ready to destroy him. Overwhelmed with sorrow, he is tempted, in this moment of deep despair, to exclaim with the venerable Patriarch, "The thing that I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of has come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came. Oh, that it would please God to stretch forth his hand and cut me off, that I may fly hence and be no more!"

3d. The world endangers our salvation by its HONOURS.

To be distinguished is the natural wish of the human heart. Like most other propensities of our nature, it stands more in need of correction than of incitement. With the honours, the applause, and fame of the world, the imagination is captivated and the soul enamoured. Those who are born to wealth, and placed in what has been invidiously denominated the superior walks of life, are apt to be drawn aside from the path of duty, to gaze at those meteors of vanity and show, which dazzle whilst they corrupt the mind. Contemplating the honours of the world, and seeking the applause of men, they neglect the contemplation of the divine attributes, the performance of devotion, and the practice of virtue—duties of eternal obligation upon all.

The attainment of a *title*, which cannot confer merit, and which in modern times is no mark of the possession of it, is pursued with a keen and immoderate avidity by the high and the wealthy. They are, like the child, pleased with the *toy* which men of sense disregard, philosophers contemn, and humble Christians despise. To obtain a name for disinterested goodness and beneficent actions, and to hand the remembrance of those to other times, is at once an honour to the possessor, and a benefit to mankind. To do *good* is an ambition which reason and Christianity encourage. To honour ourselves is the ambition of the world. But to do this, and to set your affections upon terrestrial objects, is dangerous, and to a certain extent criminal. By wishing to immortalize your names on earth, and contracting your views within the narrow limits of time, you are in danger of neglecting to secure an eternal crown, the possession of which is promised to those happy ones, whose affections are placed on things above, whose desires long for eternal enjoyments, whose faith and hope rest upon the arm of Omnipotence, whose consciences have been purified from iniquity, and whose feet are shod with the preparation of the sanctuary.

Man is fond of applause. The view of nonour captivates his eye, and the voice of fame is grateful to his ears. When you behold man in honour, and hear the applauses of the world bestowed, and its favours lavished upon one whom the crowd has elevated to doubtful popularity and short-lived eminence, you may perhaps feel a wish for obtaining similar honours and fame; or perhaps you may be dissatisfied with that humble station which the wisdom of Providence has assigned you. On such occasions do you murmur at your lot, envy the wicked, and cordially wish that you also were great and noble? Such ought not to be the feelings and desires of the real Christian, whose kingdom is not of this world. Hence the advice of the Psalmist to such envious persons: "Fret not thyself of evil doers. I have seen the wicked great in power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo! he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

Do you repine at Providence for not placing you in a higher sphere of life? and do you feel an insatiable ambition to become great and distinguished? If so, the world has in this case prevailed. You are at the mercy of your *adversary*, and have reason to dread that the pride of life will produce your final ruin. Look for assistance to God, and for direction to the religion of Jesus. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Turn your views to the land of blessedness. Set your affections upon true greatness; on the acquisition of "honour, glory, and immortality, eternal life."

If you be Christians, not only in word, but in deed, the desire of obtaining that best of all applause, "Well done, good and faithful servants," will animate your exertions, make you run and not be weary, walk and not be faint in the good ways of the Lord, and, finally, will make you more than conquerors through Him that loved you. Cherish, then, this noble desire. Let no mean motives, no grovelling desires, no unhallowed pursuits, weaken the influence, or supplant in your hearts the place of that heavenly religion, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." "Be ye followers of Christ; the *humble*, not *ambitious*, servants of your divine Redeemer; and then you will receive the *honour* that cometh from God."

4th. The world attacks the Christian by AVARICE.

To accumulate wealth, the chief, if not the whole, thoughts and exertions of the avaricious are directed. He places his affections upon money or temporal possessions. "He saith unto the gold, Thou art my hope; and to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence." Is this, Christians, the language of any of you? Is any of you more desirous of heaping up gold and silver, amassing wealth, and extending your possessions, than of laying up treasures of faith, of piety, and goodness? Are you more ardent in acquiring *property* than in cultivating those benevolent dispositions, those holy affections, those amiable graces, and those christian virtues which enrich, adorn, and exalt the man of God? Do you prefer yourselves to others, on account of *your* wealth and possessions? And do you feel more satisfaction in receiving additions to these than in receiving new communications of divine grace and new acquisitions of goodness? If such be the prevailing dispositions of your hearts, and the constant tendency of your affections, then the voice of Scripture declares, that, as you are the friends and the lovers of this world, you cannot have fellowship with God. No; sooner may light incorporate itself with darkness, than a soul thus habituated to the love of temporal objects, and grovellingly set upon the acquisition of wealth, may relish the company of pure spirits, or enjoy the exalted, refined, and permanent felicity which arises from spiritual objects. *Matter* and *mind* are separate things, and the pleasures arising from them are perfectly distinct. The superiority of *mental* enjoyments to those of *corporeal*, cannot be compared. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the joys of the soul to those of the body. The one qualifies, the other disqualifies, for the delights of heaven. "Sooner," saith our Lord, "may a camel pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich—avaricious—man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But, perhaps, it may be alleged by some, that all the concern which they show about MONEY is to gain a competency, and that when they can live at ease they will cease from the pursuit, and give up the love of riches. Against attempting to remedy present embarrassments, and laying up provision for future wants, the Scriptures offer no expostulations. But can you say that your desires will be satisfied when you have attained the objects of your present pur-

suits? or, rather, is there not reason to suppose that this is only an excuse for gratifying your avarice? Have you not made similar excuses formerly? and when you have attained the completion of your wishes, did not an uninterrupted series of *new* desires succeed to make you anxious to grasp at more? Yea, Christians, every acquisition, instead of diminishing, increased your thirst for gain. A little, and a little more, till acre is added to acre, and house to house, and the length, and the breadth of a parish fail to satisfy the growing desire! The avaricious appetite is ever crying, "Give, give, give!" and you may as well think that the ravenous *lion* will be satisfied with one mouthful of his prey, as the miser with his bags, be they ever so many.

Guard, I beseech you, against this passion. Remember that the servants of MAMMON cannot be introduced into the family of God, and that an immoderate attachment to riches and temporal possessions is incompatible with love to God and spiritual objects.

5th. But AMBITION is still more fatal and destructive than avarice. It is the fell offspring of pride. To gain its end it will stick at nothing; it scales every height, climbs every precipice, and encounters every danger. It carries the sword into distant countries, disturbs the peace of families, tramples upon the laws and the constitutions of nations, and cuts up the happiness of human society by the roots. Yes, Christians, what hath not ambition done? It has strewed the earth with the bodies of the slain, and made streams to flow with the blood of slaughtered millions! Yes, ambition has hurled the lawful sovereign from his throne, and placed the *sceptre* in the hands of a villanous usurper! It has kindled the torch and spread the flames of civil discord, robbed the rich of his wealth, torn from the poor their scanty pittance, and spread havoc and misery around!

Some may imagine that these observations are not applicable to the situation of the greatest part of this audience. Perhaps you may say that your ambition, if you have any, is confined within moderate bounds, and is far from being of a cruel nature; that it would never be productive of those enormous cruelties and extensive desolations which strike the mind with horror, and fill the earth with crime. But, Christians, take heed that all this is not fallacious. The spark has only to be applied, and when once blown into a flame, it is impossible to say where the conflagration will end. "What! is thy servant a dog," said Hazael, "that he should do these things?" is a *memento* to all such excuses. There are few invulnerable on the side of ambition. Power has so many attractions, and addresses itself to so many of our passions, that it is almost irresistible. Though your ambition may not aim at the management of *empires*, yet it may excite you to rule in the narrow circle of your acquaintance, and there endure no rival; nay, it may lead you to exercise a *tyranny* over your domestics and dependents, and make you restless till you have obtained absolute control over all the neighbourhood. Of him who would employ *sinister* means to obtain the rule of a small society, or the management of the affairs of an obscure village, it may almost, with certainty, be declared, that, to acquire absolute sway, he would wade through slaughter to a throne over the bleeding bodies of his countrymen! Let the records of *history* teach you distrust of yourselves, if you will be *counselled* by the declarations of Scripture. Had Providence never afforded to CROMWELL the means of grasping absolute authority, he might have descended into the grave without discovering the criminal ambition of his mind, and might have been honoured, by surviving friends, with the name of a *pious* and a *good man*. This character would have been indeed more honourable than that of *Protector*, which his address and able management acquired for him. Like Cromwell, few know at first what spirit they are of. A change of circumstances may bring faculties into action, and unfold powers and capabilities, of which the possessor was formerly ignorant, but which, when once developed, may be the glory or the ruin of his own and his nation's happiness.

Guard, then, against the flattering dictates of ambition, as well as the selfish suggestions of avarice. To be under the influence of avarice, is the sign of a weak and a grovelling mind. To be guided by ambition is the evidence of a haughty and tyrannical spirit. Care, anxiety, and restlessness of mind, the hatred and execrations of mankind, are the honours and rewards which avarice and ambition bestow on those who are their deluded votaries.

6th. The world makes successful attacks on the Christian by its—PLEASURES.

The pleasures of the world excite desires, which stimulate to gratification, and prompt mankind to engage in pursuits that lead to the destruction of all good principles—to the debasement of virtuous sentiments—to the

ruin of temporal, and, what is infinitely of more value, to the loss of eternal interests.

By the allurements of pleasure, man is induced to improve the opportunities, to acquire the means, and to seek for the objects of gratification. In an age of luxury and dissipation, the world makes successful attacks, by fomenting "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life." Hence the depravity of morals, the impurity of passion, and the baseness of pursuits, which are the disgraceful characteristics of the times, and which, if not corrected, may unhappily transmit effeminacy and lethargy to generations yet unborn, and thus entail misery upon posterity. Gloomy, indeed, is the prospect which a nation, indulging in sensuality, and habituated to debilitating impurity, presents to the view of the christian and philanthropic mind.

When you hear one openly boasting of his pleasures; of having robbed some unsuspecting youth of the pledge of her innocence; of having violated the marriage bed, and sacrificed to intemperance; when you hear this, you may pronounce such a one amongst the *reprobate;* and, if the God of mercy do not interpose, he will soon be made to drink of that cup of wo, which contains a mixture inexpressibly bitter to them, whose crimes have brought ruin and *infamy* upon the reputation of others. Degraded must that man be, and abandoned to all manly feeling, who can openly avow his sensual practices; and base, and *cowardly*, and hard his heart who can sit silent when he hears such behaviour made the subject of exultation and impious boasting. If your minds be impressed with a sense of virtue; if your souls be not as defiled as their own, will not an *indignant* flame on such occasions rise in your bosoms? Will not indignant emotions be excited at such avowed *profligacy?* and will you not be roused to assert the cause of God, of religion, and virtue? If you fail, whatever be your rank, to reprehend conduct of this kind, the JUDGE of all the earth will require, at your hands, a serious account of the misimprovement of so favourable an opportunity for confessing *Him* and his cause "before a perverse and evil generation."

Beware, then, of encouraging, either in yourselves or others, sensual propensities. One unsuspecting draught of the cup of sinful pleasure may communicate to the soul that fatal poison, which will contaminate and destroy every principle of goodness. Let, then, this important, but humiliating truth be impressed upon your minds, and operate in the regulation of your lives: That the pursuit of criminal pleasures turns the affections of the heart from the love of intellectual and heavenly enjoyments, to objects that are as *mean* as they are *base*, and as unsatisfactory as they are ruinous; that they debase the faculties of the soul, enervate the powers of the body; and, in the warning words of the *bard*—

"Harden a' within, and petrify the feelings."

7th. The prevalence of *bad* example, the *ridicule* of the world, and the *fashion* of the times, are peculiarly hurtful to the progress of religion.

Bad example abounds, and its contaminating breath pollutes the pure atmosphere of virtue. The manners of the world are founded upon the narrow principle of *self-love*. On this principle, those whom we admire, and value, and esteem, *we* are apt to copy; and just as the human heart is estranged from God and goodness, to that extent will it imitate the bad examples that are set before it. The world is an *ungenial* soil for the culture of piety; yet, if we wish to live in it, we must be contented at times to mingle with the company it affords, and to comply, to a certain extent, with their modes and maxims, else they will reject us. But the maxims of the Gospel are founded upon the broad basis, not of self-love, but of *universal benevolence*, and forbid us to imitate or adopt any thing which would lead us astray from the approbation of conscience, the service of God, and the good of our neighbours.

That bad example has uncommon power over us, is the language of Scripture. It is placed above precept. The one addresses itself to the eye; the other to the mind. Precept instructs us what things it is our duty to do. Example shows us how this duty is performed. Precepts address themselves to our reason. Examples, by a secret and lively incentive, urge us on to imitation. Hence we are commanded to shun evil company; not to imitate the example of the ungodly; not to be conformed unto this world; to take as a pattern for imitation, as a model for us to copy, the examples of Christ, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners; and who went about continually doing good."

Ridicule, it is admitted, is often powerful. It has been called falsely the *test* of truth, because most men can bear argument, but cannot bear to be laughed at; and it must be owned, that often when reason has failed to convince, ridicule has

silenced. An acute and lively imagination may turn the greatest truths into ridicule. Axioms themselves may not stand before him; but still the truth is not affected thereby in the estimation of the *wise*, though in the eyes of the young and inexperienced it may be turned into foolishness. Let the *young* learn to despise ridicule when launched against religion; and to remember, that "an atheist's laugh 's a poor reward for deity offended."

The *fashion* of the times, however, is a greater corrupter than ridicule. Men that live in the world must, to a certain extent, adopt its fashions. But piety and practical religion belong not to the modes of *fashionable* life. The brilliant assembly, the dramatic representation, the ballet of the opera, or the scenes of the theatre, the dance and the song, with sumptuous and splendid entertainments now so common, —innumerable other fashionable amusements—tend not to improve the *morals*, or inspire sentiments of *devotion*. On returning from them, do we find our hearts purified, our faith strengthened, or our hopes elevated? Do we feel a higher incentive to "enter into our chambers," to "shut the door behind us," and there "converse with God and our own hearts?" Or, does not the one hasten to the *toilet*, and the other to the *dressing-room*, and retire to rest without God being in all our hidden thoughts? For the songs of the *opera*, we have laid aside the songs of Zion; for the *book* of eternal life, we take up the *novel* or romance; and, for the house of prayer, the play-house or the gaming table. The house of feasting or of merriment are their favourite resorts. For these, the means of promoting purity of heart and holiness of life, are neglected; and though enjoying in exuberance the bounties of Providence; though their board is crowned with abundance, and their cup is running over; yet they scarcely deign to ask a blessing on their meals, or return thanks for his goodness. They forget the duties of the closet and the family; profane, with their entertainments, the Lord's day; while, in place of going to church, too many of them make it a day of amusement, by walking or riding through their estates, enjoying company, and spending its evening in amusement, gambling, or fashionable play.

These are the mighty in the earth! these are our fashionables! An inferior *fry* follow their example; and the exercises of religion are by them also excluded from their dwellings. Ah, what is their criminality! How awful their accountability! "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more." God has committed *much* to them, and from them he asks the more. Do they cry out against one whom they have benefited or patronised, when he proves ungrateful and insensible to the benefits he has received? What, then, do they imagine GOD must think of them, when they receive all his blessings with ingratitude, and return not that thanks which is due unto his name? Oh! let such *fashionables* remember, that the fashion of this world passeth soon away; that time is running; that death is hastening his approach; that after death cometh the judgment, when their *rank* and their greatness will be of no avail; and where no distinction shall be known, but the distinction between *virtue* and *vice*. In the language of the Psalmist, I would say unto them, "Be wise now; serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the *Son* least he be angry, and ye perish from the way; when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

8th. But if the fashion of the world be dangerous, the attacks of INFIDELITY are often destructive.

The adversaries of our faith are many, and their resources great. Every thing that perverted minds can invent, that malice can devise, that daring effrontery can propose, or that abandoned characters can put into execution, has been done to overturn the venerable fabric of revelation. We are incessantly exposed to the attempts of those who would undermine the foundation of our dearest and our future hopes.

When the Gospel was promulgated by our Lord himself and his Apostles, the standard of *infidelity* was unfurled on the mountains of Judea. Men habituated to the splendid forms of worship, and prejudiced in favour of those systems to which they had long been accustomed, and in which they had early been instructed, were unwilling to relinquish the ceremonial observances of their religion, and were averse to yield the precedency to the christian dispensation. A blind zeal, and an indiscriminate attachment to the customs and institutions of *papal* Rome, was also one of the great obstacles to the propagation of truth, and one of the great causes of the perpetuity of error in the christian world. The propensity of the mind to venerate and preserve the usages and institutions of *antiquity*

operated with peculiar force in the primitive ages of Christianity. The cry of innovation was raised, and men were tempted by the dread of change from embracing the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. During successive ages, whilst it improved society, *Christianity* had to maintain a constant struggle with the powers of this world, and the prince and the power of darkness. Persecution with its flaming brand, and proscription and the Inquisition with their frightful train of imprisonments and deaths, attempted to stifle Christianity in its birth, or to crush it in its growth. It was ridiculed, disbelieved, and reviled; yet it extended its triumphs, and went forth conquering and to conquer.

But still the enemies of our faith meditate new attacks, and devising new plans for the subversion of our religion, make renewed efforts to establish the reign of infidelity, to encourage the growth of error, and to give stability to the most degrading system of superstition that ever disgraced the earth.

In different ages, the enemies of our faith have attempted to destroy the influence and the exercise of pure religion. The means and the stratagems they have employed for this purpose have been many and various. At one time the infidel pretends to be the asserter of truth, the apostle of virtue, the guide to happiness, and the friend of the human race! He laments over the ages of *superstition* that are past; ascribes to the bigotry and abuse of priestcraft the perversion of *true* religion; and, whining over the deluded state of man, declares, that by his system he will teach the way of God more perfectly! In this way, by working upon your esteem, he gives a secret stab to your principles, and undermines the fabric of your hopes before you are aware.

At another time the infidel will assume the character of an open and determined enemy to all *revealed* religion; and, marching forward in the confidence of victory, he brandishes the weapon of *ridicule*, and makes his attack in all the formidable array of wit, learning, and casuistry.

But, in these times, the enemies of religion have become more numerous and enterprising. They set off their opinions, and embellish their quibbles, with all the glare of ornament which gems can produce or learning furnish. They draw from every source; nature and art they lay under contribution. The authority of history, in confirmation of positive fact, they reject! the testimony of their senses they dispute! the arguments from prophecy, and miracles, and the *Old* Testament, they ridicule! Every thing sacred and divine, their malice and envy at the cross of Christ leads them to tear up by the roots. By controverting the tenets of men, they have endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to overturn the truths of revelation; and, by ascribing the progress of Christianity to false and inadequate causes, they have wished to impress the idea upon the world that it is a mere human invention, unsupported by the authority, and unaided by the countenance and protection of heaven. Ah! ye cruel men, enemies to our holy religion and the happiness of society, if ye have not the magnanimity to be generous, show at least that you have the sympathy to be compassionate. If your hearts are insensible to the holiness of Christianity, let your bosoms swell with the benevolence which it breathes; and, instead of adding to the wretchedness, diminish the misery of the human race. Christianity has civilized Europe; give it your aid, and it will civilize the world!!!

Thus, Christians, have I endeavoured to lay before you a few of the means by which the world endangers man's salvation. It does this by *prosperity* and *adversity;* by its *honours* and *pleasures;* by *bad* example, *ridicule*, and the *fashion* of the times; and, above all, by the attacks of a cruel *infidelity*. Permit me now to conclude with some inferences deducible from the foregoing illustrations. And,

1st. By the view we have placed before you, we are taught to consider the *world* as our enemy, when it comes in competition with religion.

We are placed here in preparation for a state of being more pure and dignified. By our connexion with the present life, and attachment to it, our affections are apt to be riveted to its scenes and enjoyments. Fondness for these banish from the mind the thoughts of eternal felicity. It is the aim of this world to fix man's attention upon its objects, and to hide from his view the delightful prospects that lie beyond the blue hills which terminate the horizon of this valley of tears. But it is the aim of revelation to fix man's attention upon another and a better life, and to direct his eyes to that blissful land where there is no more sorrow, nor sighing, nor death. Distrust, then, the seductions of this world and its pleasures, and, through the *atonement*, fix your eyes on immortality.

Would you consider that *man* your friend, who, to prevent you from acquiring some great and permanent possession, would endeavour to turn away your attention to some trifling momentary pursuit? And can you esteem the world as your real friend, when it would draw your affections from eternal to temporal objects? Christians, beware of it, when it would lead you to value the pleasures of life above the pure and permanent bliss which is at God's right hand; when it would incline you to listen to the applause of men, rather than to the voice of conscience and the approbation of God; when it whispers in the ear of vanity to disregard, as *visionary* reveries, those views which the analogy of nature, the deductions of reason, and the inspirations of Scripture, authorize believers to entertain of their future improvement and happiness—in those new heavens and that new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell for ever. In fine, when the world would dispose you to estimate the present life as your *alone* portion; while it attempts to rob you of an inheritance among them that are sanctified; when it does this, cast it from you as your greatest enemy, and the destroyer of your brightest hopes and most soothing consolations, under the severest trials of humanity. In all these, view the world with a suspicious eye, and repel its attacks with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of truth.

2d. By the preceding illustration, we are forewarned of the danger to which we are exposed in this world. The way that leads to the mansions of bliss is, on all hands, infested with enemies. The country through which we travel is at best uncultivated; the scenes it presents are dreary, and the prospect all around cheerless and gloomy. Behind and before we are beset with dangers; on every hand *banditti* are ready to spring from their lurking-place to destroy us. Few and evil are the days of man. Has he hours of gladness, how soon are they succeeded by nights of sorrow? The morning sun may shine upon his dwelling, and his noon-day beams see it desolate! Verily, the present life shall soon be over; but, blessed be God, his Gospel assures us that, by the sacrifice of Christ, the curse is taken away; death is vanquished, and the gates of the eternal world set open for all the pious.

3d. The miserable condition and latter end of that man whom the world leads captive at its will, who would wish to review? Would you see him in the busy period of life, captivated with the allurements of pleasure, following eagerly the phantoms of renown, obedient to the impulse of every rising passion, "crowning himself with rosebuds," and saying, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundantly!" See him, unrestrained by the influence of conscience, or the salutary suggestions of wisdom, the sport of ambition, of every base passion and wayward fancy, involved in the destroying *vortex* of giddy dissipation and dissolute debauchery! See, as he advances in his career, his body emaciated, his spirits sunk, his mind melancholy, and gloom and disappointment giving to him a disrelish of life! See him on the bed of sickness, silently reviewing the former period of his life, casting a languishing look on departed joys, or with a remorseful eye glancing over a long catalogue of past crimes! See him looking forward to the approaching hour of dissolution, to the hopeless prospect of eternity, or the cheerless, heart-rending agony of total annihilation! Think of such a one, in his last moments, deserted by the world, deprived of peace, lying on the rack of conscience, without God and without solid hope, and say if there be misery like unto his misery, in the day when God requireth of him his soul? His latter end wrings the heart of tenderness with agony.

Thus, Christians, you see how the love of the world is enmity against God; that it is prejudicial to the growth of piety, to peace of mind, to comfort under distress, to consolation in life, and good hope in death. Use, then, the world so as not to abuse it; remember that you cannot serve God and mammon; and let the language of the Prophet be yours: "O Lord, our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but henceforth we will serve thee, and thee only."

II. This leads to the second part of my discourse, which is to show you by what *means* faith enables man to overcome the world. But this, God willing, shall be the subject of another discourse. May God bless for your use what you have now heard, and to his name in Christ be all the praise, as it was in the beginning, now is, and shall be evermore. Amen.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER FLEMING, Neilston.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM ORR, Fenwick.

THE MEANS BY WHICH FAITH OVERCOMES THE WORLD

A Sermon by the Rev. ALEXANDER FLEMING.—*Concluded.*

WITHOUT spending time in retracing the views given of the *term* world, in the former discourse from this text, or attempting any farther illustration by which the world seduces man through its prosperity and adversity, its honours and ambition, its bad example and fashionable pleasures, its ridicule and its infidelity, we shall proceed to the consideration of the *second* head of discourse, viz., to direct your attention to some of the *means* by which "faith overcomes the world."

Before doing this, however, it may be proper to make a few preliminary observations on the *origin* and *nature* of faith, since so great is its effect in the christian dispensation, that the apostle Paul saith, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Heb. xi. 6. This truth is obvious to every one who is acquainted with the operations of his own mind, or who seriously reflects upon the divine attributes. Faith, even in worldly matters, is the *foundation* of all our confidence and intercourse with mankind. By it we believe the testimony of others, rely upon their promises, trust to their fulfilment, and on it give them our *goods* upon credit. It is the very *principle* of commerce, merchandise, and trade. No man would give away his property to another *on trust*, but upon the faith of receiving, in due time, its full value, as no man would rely on the declarations of others, if he did not believe them to be men of truth and integrity. So it is in religion. The true *believer* relies on the *faithfulness* of God, on his *veracity*, and the *impossibility* of his deceiving him; (Tit. i. 2; Heb. vi. 18,) and has a perfect conviction, that, whatever God has promised, he will infallibly perform. On these grounds, the Patriarch proceeded: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son." Heb. xi. 17. In like manner, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again," then we shall undoubtingly believe, that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." 1 Thess. iv. 14. In our firm assent to the authority of divine revelation, we thus "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, even unto the end." Heb. x. 23.

With respect to the *origin* of faith, opinions have been various—some making it the effect of *immediate* revelation; others of divine evidence, as given in the Scriptures. In either way it is divine, and is the *gift* of God; not the result of *natural* religion, or the discovery of mere human reason, unassisted and undirected. The native ignorance and depravity of the mind, the darkness of our understandings, and the power of passion and appetite, exclude the possibility of acquiring that *faith* which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. It cannot be discovered by the natural powers of man. The *experience* of all nations, who have been favoured with no other guide or assistant than their own unassisted reason, proves incontrovertibly the fact, that by no effort of faith could they arrive at the belief of pardon bestowed by an offended Judge, or appease an incensed Deity. Instead of *natural* reason giving that faith, which some have concluded it might, we find, in the absence of revelation, all nations sunk in error and superstition, living "without God and without hope in the world," overwhelmed with idolatry, and guilty of the most revolting practices. True, when grief depressed, or despair distracted the mind; when man viewed his hopeless situation, and in melancholy anticipated that long train of wo which would succeed transgression, he might exclaim, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself

before the Most High God?" And superstition in that moment might direct him to offer up "thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil;" nay, to "give his first-born for his transgression, and the fruit of his body for the sins of his soul." Yet, even then, the clouds of uncertainty and doubt overhung his mind, and made him fear that the sacrifice was not *adequate* to the offence, and that "the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins." Heb. x. 7. Hence the necessity of a revelation to *originate* and support by its evidences, that faith which overcometh the world, and worketh by love.

Of the *nature* of this FAITH, much has been said and written. Some with great ingenuity have distinguished it into *four* kinds: "Historical and temporary; the faith of miracles, and justifying or saving faith." But these are distinctions without any real difference. Faith is the *same*, in its nature, whatever be the object it rests upon. Whether it be historical facts, or temporary, or a belief in miracles and prophecy, or justifying faith, still it is an assent of the mind, at the time, to what is stated or believed. The faith of devils is a full conviction in the being of God. The assent of the mind to revealed truth, however *temporary*, is assuredly, for the time being, as real as the seed which was sown on stony ground; and so is the assent of the mind to miracles performed by Christ or his Apostles. And what more is justifying or saving faith? Is it not also a firm assent of the mind to revelation, in the doctrine and promises of God, in the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world, the Son and the sent of God, who, by his *vicarious* sufferings and death, has "magnified the law, and made it honourable," (Is. xlii. 21,) and brought in an everlasting righteousness, even the sure mercies of David? Is. lv. 3. Hence the admirable definition of it in our Shorter Catechism: "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the Gospel."

This justifying faith is said by some to be a grace wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, through or by *immediate* inspiration. Cases of this kind have occurred, and may again occur; but that is not the *ordinary* way of God's producing it, as pointed out in the Scriptures. The way pointed out therein is simple and plain. Scripture is made the *medium* of it, and the *evidence* therein found, under the influence of the Spirit, produces it. "Whosoever," saith Paul, "shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. x. 13—17.

Here every thing comes in a natural way. Yet faith is not less the *gift* of God, coming to the believer in this manner, than if it had come by *immediate* inspiration. Indeed, the one is as much from heaven as the other. As the bread that perisheth is the gift of God, and cometh to us through a natural channel, so is the bread that endureth unto everlasting life. The EARTH is the *secondary* cause of the one; the BIBLE that of the other. As the earth has conferred on it productive powers, so the Scriptures have in them "spirit and life." John vi. 63; Rom. viii. 2; Heb. iv. 12. To obtain, however, the bread that perisheth, man must plough, and sow, and reap, and make the bread *corn* pass through the manifold manipulations, before it is fit for nourishment and supporting life; so, in like manner, the spiritual soil must be prepared and cultivated through diligent meditation and prayer, attendance on divine ordinances, and the ministrations of word and sacraments, that through these, with the influence of the *Spirit*, it may produce *in* us "the fruits of righteousness which are, by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Philip. i. 11.

This is the Gospel method by which justifying or saving faith is to obtained; and he that neglects it has no more reason to complain of spiritual famine, than the husbandman, who does not cultivate his farm, of the want of a crop. The *means* and the *ends* are inseparably connected; and he who neglects the one, will look in vain for the possession and enjoyment of the other.

Having thus stated the nature and origin of faith, let us now, more particularly, consider by what *means* it overcometh the world, and, like a mighty conqueror, subdues our violent passions and evil inclinations; "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 5. In a word, let us view the power by which this irresistible

Victor dispels the clouds of adversity, dims the lustre of this world's honours, excites contempt for avarice, robs ambition of her charms, weakens the force of bad example, and exhibits fashionable pleasures in all that inanity and folly in which the mind never fails to see them, in the hour of serious thought, or at the moment of dissolution, putting to flight the whole hosts of ridicule and infidelity—

> "Quick as the slaughter'd squadrons fell
> In Midian's evil day "* And—

I. Faith overcomes the world, by believing that life and immortality are brought clearly to light by the Gospel of Christ, and that a glorious reward is prepared for the righteous.

Amidst the days of darkness which, with the best, are often many, some brighter prospects than those which this world holds forth are necessary to revive and cheer the drooping spirits. Amidst the vicissitudes and disappointments of life, the hope of future happiness can alone produce real and substantial comfort. Destitute of the prospect of immortality, life is but a joyless waste. To the hope and the felicity which this prospect inspires, some ancient philosophers trusted. But their hopes were ill founded; and when about to enter into the dark valley and shadow of death, futurity afforded to them little that was comfortable. Their hopes rested on a *peradventure*, not on *certainty*, and the bright prospect vanished.

It may be alleged, however, that *natural* religion, as improved and stript of its superstition by modern philosophers, may infuse more comfort into the soul, longing for immortality. But when man reflects on the unspotted perfections of the divine nature, on his many violations of the *moral* law, and his frequent disobedience, nay, contempt for the dictates of conscience, either despair or presumptuous arrogance enters in and takes possession of his mind. In either or both of these states, no rational or religious comfort can be derived from the prospects of eternity. Faith, before it can overcome the world, must be placed upon some eminence, whence it may have a clear and distinct view of the land of promise. But no where can such an eminence be found save on the mount of revelation. There it stands elevated far above all terrestrial objects, and surveys, like Moses on Mount *Pisgah*, the land that is afar off.

From the Scriptures, the Christian is established in the belief of a future state, and the permanency there of the divine favour. From this source, as from the wells of salvation, he draws consolation. In the hours of his darkest adversity, and the nights of his most wearisome pilgrimage on earth, he frequently anticipates that state of glory and blessedness which awaits the just in another state. He views the way of access by a Redeemer, and the mansions of bliss which he has purchased. Through what he did, and taught, and suffered, he considers himself as an heir of promise, as a fellow-citizen with the saints and household of faith. The hope of that future felicity which he had forfeited by sin, but which is restored to him by the Redeemer, enables him to support with patience the hard vicissitudes of life, and to overcome the attacks of the world in their most appalling and terrific forms.

II. By depending upon the divine promises and assistance, *faith* enables the Christian to become victorious over the world.

Man is often ready to despond, and when attacked severely by the misfortunes of life, even the prospects of futurity may not operate upon his mind with a force sufficiently strong to enable him to prove victorious. In the attempts which he makes to support himself against the hardships, the misfortune, and the disappointments of his lot, he stands in need of *superior* assistance; and the belief that it will be given him, in the time of trial and in the hour of need, supports his fainting spirits, and oftentimes renders him more than a conqueror. At such a time, though the billows of adversity beat against him, and the turbulent ocean of distress rolls and swells around him, he remains firm and undaunted, when he believes that the arm of Omnipotence defends him, and relies on his promise that he will never leave nor forsake him. Believing that all events which the Almighty accomplishes are righteous, he yields a willing resignation to Heaven's appointments. Trusting that all the schemes of Providence are devised by a wisdom that is perfect, and executed by a skill that cannot err; that all his ways are productive of final good to them who fear, and love, and serve God; and that they contribute, in general, to the happiness of mankind; under this belief the pious man is resigned to his situation, and is enabled to support, with becoming fortitude, the hard vicissitudes of life.

The promise that "all things shall work together for the good of them that love

* Paraphrase xix. 3.

God and keep his commandments; (Rom. viii. 28,) that "when the righteous pass through the waters, they shall not overwhelm; neither shall the flames kindle upon him, nor any heat;" (Is. xliii. 2,) these delightful assurances of a faithful God confirm his mind, establish his faith, and strengthen his hopes! The conviction that "the Lord will be his shield, the upholder of his head, and his exceeding great reward," (Ps. cxv. 8, 9,) dispels his fears, which, on such occasions, are apt to darken and disturb the mind, and to fill him with all peace and joy in believing. It is declared in Scripture—and faith relies on the declaration—that the Almighty will be a wall of fire to defend his people against all evil, and that no harm which can affect their eternal welfare shall come nigh their dwelling. Though the enemy should come in like a flood, the Christian believes that he shall be strengthened to resist even the fiery darts of the wicked One. The eternal God has promised to "be his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Deut. xxxiii. 27. As he accomplished his promises to Israel by destroying the Canaanites, so he shall accomplish, to the happy experience of every true believer, his declarations, by enabling them to overcome the world, its cares and sorrows, its pleasures and allurements, its terrible threatenings and deceitful allurements, and shall say—"Destroy them utterly with a mighty destruction." Deut. vii. 23.

Acting on this belief, the believer can adopt the exclamation of Moses, and, applying it to himself, may say, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places." Deut. xxxiii. 29.

It is thus that, by a firm dependence upon the divine assistance, and marching forward in the strength of the Lord to the combat, the Christian remains invulnerable. By perseverance, he obtains the victory over the world, strips it of its armour, and triumphs over it. It was in this manner that the ancient worthies fought and conquered, and triumphed. Hence, under the influences of this faith, the Prophet was enabled to say, when looking forward to privations and want, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be found in the vine; though the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; though the flocks should be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet shall I rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation." Habak. iii. 17, 18.

III. Faith overcomes the world, by directing the current of the desires to objects and pursuits that tend to *exalt* the character, and turn the current of our thoughts to nobler objects.

Attachment to some particular object, or fondness for some favourite pursuit, has a tendency to produce an indifference to other objects and pursuits which do not immediately contribute to the confirmation of that attachment, or the promotion of our views. In the contemplation of objects, or scenes, which are present and pleasant, we are apt to neglect those that are absent, even though the appearance of the latter be still more beautiful, or their acquisition still more important and lasting than the former.

These observations apply equally to men viewed as expectants of immortality, as to beings occupied about temporal pursuits. Those desires which long for immortal enjoyment; those affections that attach the soul to Him who gave it; and those views which are directed by the felicity of another world, are apt to be counteracted by desires for sensual enjoyment, attracted by the allurements of temporal objects, or darkened by the gloom of doubt which, at certain painful moments of life, are apt to overspread the human mind. Familiarity with the *present* too often separates our attachment from the *future*. The best have their dark days in their passage through life, and the strongest faith and most delightful promises are at times lost in the appalling prospect of death, judgment, and eternity.

By the constitution of our nature, what has been called the principles of the mind, and affections of the soul, must have pursuits and objects that afford pleasure to the one, and exercise to the other. By giving a loose to wayward fancies and extravagant sallies of desire, mankind are often hurried on to pursuits destructive of their true interests and eternal welfare. But faith directs the views of man to objects of real value, to pursuits productive of real pleasure, and which lead to the enjoyment of eternal happiness in the issue.

Is *ambition* or a love of power your ruling passion? The christian religion takes advantage of this propensity, and directs our eyes to views at once splendid and sublime in the world to come. Instead of directing our efforts to the well-fought field, and the laurels which adorn the hero's brow, and the

splendour of a short-lived fame, it directs them against the enemies of our peace, in that field of battle where the innocent fall not the victims of indiscriminate slaughter and murdering rage; but where vice and iniquity shall be finally discomfited, and where those laurels which the approbation of conscience and of God wither not around the head of the conqueror. Ambition is thus, by faith, engaged in a holy contest against the temptations of the world; the final issue of which is, to the man of true piety and christian fortitude, the prize of the high calling of God.

Is *pleasure* our object, and are *we* devoted to sensual gratification? These low and grovelling desires faith overcomes, by pointing out to the real lovers of pleasure the acquisition of those sources of intellectual and moral enjoyment which are at the right hand of the Most High, the streams of which, even in this world, may be tasted by those who practise the duties of religion, and engage with delight in the exercises of devotion. The joys that flow from the exercise of piety and spiritual contemplation is of a pure and exhilarating nature. Faith satisfies the thirst of happiness in the soul from the well-springs of living waters—the fountains of knowledge and salvation, which, while they refresh the soul, purify its desires, and stimulate to the acquisition of endless, uncontaminated bliss!!!

Are *riches*, and *wealth*, and *honour*, the objects of your desire? Remember these are only relative; and that in them there is nothing substantial or permanent. That even our opinion of them is constantly changing, and often as short-lived as they are deceitful and unsatisfactory. Hence an object, which at one period we may deem splendid and magnificent, shall afterwards appear contemptible and unworthy of our notice, compared with objects which are more magnificent and sublime. And hence, too, comparing the riches of the present life with those of the future, the vast superiority of the latter may be so striking and obvious as to lead the good man to say with St. Paul, "They are not worthy to be compared with that glory which is hereafter to be revealed." Rom. viii. 18.

It is thus that faith overcomes the world. It sinks into comparative insignificance its grandeur and riches, when contrasted with the splendour and glory which the Scripture presents of the New Jerusalem. The treasure of the Christian is in heaven, whence he looks for the Saviour. It is thus, that faith draws off the avaricious desires which formerly pervaded his breast, and from worldly riches, turns the current of his soul to those immense and incalculable riches which are at God's right hand. It lays up in heaven, treasures of piety, charity, and good works, "where moth and rust corrupt not, and where thieves do not break through and steal;" (Matt. vi. 19, 20.) and thus exalts the Christian by turning the current of his desires to heavenly objects, and to pursuits of unfading pleasures and never-ending joys.

IV. Faith overcomes the world by exciting in us a *horror* of SIN, and a love of holiness.

This principle of faith not only exalts the character, and expands the conceptions of the mind, and regulates and purifies the dispositions of the heart and the actions of the life; it also produces in the *believer* a hatred of all iniquity.

It is impossible to believe with sincerity the truths of the Gospel, and especially that of the *atonement* for sin by the death of Christ, without being convinced of the degrading nature of vice, and the obligations under which we lie to avoid it—to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord—and to keep "consciences void of offence toward God and toward man." Acts xxiv. 16.

True faith as necessarily produces sorrow for sin, amendment of life, and integrity of conduct, as the fig-tree produces figs, or the vine grapes. It is impossible *seriously* to believe that the Saviour offered up himself a sacrifice for sin;—that sin is of that heinous nature, which nothing else could atone for it but the death of Christ; and yet, with this belief, to continue in the love and practice of that iniquity, which was the cause of his sufferings.

Whether we believe it or not, this, nevertheless, is true, that if any continue in the habitual indulgence of irregular appetites and depraved affections, he is not, as yet, among those who honestly believe in the death of Christ, and in the truth of his religion; and if he believe not this to the saving of his soul, his belief is vain, and he is yet in his sins. Is it possible to believe in the divine promises, and firmly to depend upon the assistance of the Almighty and yet feel a habitual enmity to the will, and a continuance in a course of disobedience to the just commands of our Maker, preserver, an judge?

Under such circumstances, to suppose that we can receive consolation from the promises, or strength from the assistance of God, is absurd, as it is unreasonable. To indulge hope in this state, is to make

God a liar; to set his threatenings aside, and to despise all his reproofs—in a word, it is to slight the Lord who made us. To believe him merciful, where he has told us his mercy is clean gone; to think that he will not be so good as his word; that notwithstanding all his warnings and laws, he will not put them into execution; and thus, by such reasonings, to make the Almighty a man, that he should lie, and the Son of man, that he should repent. This would be assuming the character of the sons of God, and yet acting the part of the prodigal, before he came to himself; rejecting his parental authority, and spending the talents which he has bestowed, in riot and debauchery, far from your Father's house. In such a case, our pretensions are vain, our hope is hopeless. For till enmity dwell with friendship; till light incorporate itself with darkness, the faith of the Christian will ever be incompatible with a depraved heart, irregular habits, and an unholy life!

If, on the contrary, we are indeed and in truth united to the captain of our salvation; if we possess the same mind which was in him; if we act from the same motives, and for the attainment of the same ends, then shall we be like him, though not in so high a degree, "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching out to those that are before, we shall be pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Phil. iii. 14.

Men, alas! have too often deceived themselves in this matter, by imagining that they possess true faith, when they are only actuated by a blind credulity, or the aberrations of a heated fancy, or enthusiastic feelings. But, Christians, be assured, that unless your belief in the great doctrines of Christianity lead you to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," (Tit. ii. 2,)—unless it bring under subjection your irregular passions, and depraved affections, and perverse dispositions, to the nobler and more exalted principles of an enlightened reason and a purified conscience, you do not possess that faith, nor will you ever achieve the victory which overcometh the world.

By such conduct, you deprive yourselves of the assistance of heaven. If the world without assault you, and if it be not opposed from within by a well regulated mind, must not you fall before the attack? Can a fortress, defended by contending factions withstand the assaults of a vigorous enemy? Will the *citadel* long be safe when the *suburbs* are betrayed? Can you expect the traitor long to hold out against the allurements of the foe? If not, then you can have no security against the temptations of the world, when you have no *internal* principle of *faith*, goodness, and integrity to stand out against them. What, I ask you, will enable you to overcome the allurements to pleasure, when your internal frame is roused and heated by passion, excited by appetite, and crying for immediate gratification? Will any thing, then, be able to subdue these, but that faith which realizes a present Deity, which brings an impartial tribunal to our view, and which sets upon it a Judge who cannot be deceived, who knows our thoughts afar off, is well acquainted with all our ways, and who "will judge righteous judgment to every man according to his works?" Nothing but a belief of this will save him in such an hour of temptation and allurement and fortify his mind against all the attacks of the wicked one. Then, and then truly, the Christian finds that his faith overcomes the world, by purifying his heart, giving to him self-government in the midst of danger, and animating him to resist the allurements of the world, by the prospects of a glorious eternity. Finally,

V. Faith overcometh the world by animating the believer to imitate the *examples* of the good and praiseworthy, who have gone before him.

There is a principle within us which disposes the mind to admire great, and to esteem good and benevolent actions. Admiration and esteem often produce an enthusiasm which animates to noble imitation. Hence have arisen many illustrious achievements, and heroic and beneficial actions. As imitation operates with such powerful energy, so, when properly directed, it is of great advantage to strengthen our faith. The example of patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, are heart-stirring.

When we read of them who have been faithful to the cause of God, of religion, and virtue—whose minds were imbued with the piety and goodness of those who have suffered the loss of all things in defence of principles which ennoble and adorn our nature;—when we think of those who gloried in the fires, and laughed, even *there*, their enemies to scorn, and handing their names down as execrable to future generations;—and when we read of those of whom the world was not worthy, we feel in our breasts a glow of holy ardour, a flame of intense admiration and applause, and pant-

ing desires to oe enrolled, like them, in the register of heaven's bright fame—we keep their memories in grateful remembranee. Yes, Christians, a holy life is the most valuable patrimony you can bequeath to posterity. Do you wish to transmit such a memorial of yourselves? Then aim at the honour of being benefactors to posterity, by living lives of faith, of purity, and piety, in imitation of your Redeemer and his disciples.—An emulation of this kind is worthy of being cherished. Every holy being in heaven and in earth will approve of it: and whilst it will bless your own consciences, it will tend to promote the prosperity and happiness of your posterity to the third and fourth generation. By such acts "the memory of the just is blessed, and the righteous held in everlasting remembranee." Ps. cxü. 6.

Are you, then, dejected by the frowns and misfortunes of the world—with the loss of dear relatives, and with the various cares and sorrows of life? Be not, Christians, discouraged. Your Saviour bore more than you can endure; and by continuing steadfast in the love and imitation of him, you, too, will rise superior to all the distresses that can befall you. Behold the operation of this faith in his servants in every age. See it in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Behold it in Moses, enabling him to accouut the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. See it in all them who had respect to the recompense of reward. "The time would fail me," saith St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews—"to speak of the thousands, who *through faith* subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens: who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, tormented: who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. These all having obtained a good report through faith," (Heb. xi,) are now inheriting the promises. "What are these, said the elder, which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. vii. 13—17.

Such are the triumphs of faith:—they are given for our encouragement and support, that they may animate our minds in their sojournings on earth, and by recalling this venerable band of *worthies* to remembranee, to fight, like them, the good fight of faith, that so *we* also may lay hold upon eternal life.

Thus, Christians, have I finished what I intended. I have shown you that saving faith is a firm, and permanent, and operative belief in the truths of the Gospel, enlightening the understanding, and animating the heart and conduct in a life of progressive holiness—and have shown you by what *means* faith overcometh the world.

1. By teaching the Christian that life and immortality are brought to light by Jesus Christ.

2. By leading him to depend upon the fulfilment of the divine promises and divine assistance.

3. By directing the current of our desires to objects and pursuits that tend to exalt the character and purify the heart. And,

4. By exciting us to imitate the example of the pious and the good in every age, and who are now inheriting the promises. After what has been said, a single remark or two shall close this discourse.

1. And, first, anxiously inquire if you possess, in reality, this *saving* faith. If you have it, you cannot fail to know it, nor can you be deprived of the consolatiou which a consciousness of possessing it is ever calculated to inspire. Try yourselves, then, by the *tests* we have given. The test, the infallible test of its producing good fruits. Being in you, it cannot remain latent in the mind any more than good seed sown in a good soil can remain there without springing up. Faith and practice must go together. They are never separated. Faith guides and directs the will and the affections, the desires and inclinations, and penetrates and possesses the whole soul. Working by love, it fails not to produce obedience—gratitude to God, and benevolence to man—a uniform respect to all God's commandments—and a steady perseverance in the several duties of a godly, sober, and righteous life. These are the fruits of faith.

Yet we are told, that a man may believe and practise all this, and be, at the same time, in no better state than a heathen, if he have not a believing and an abiding assurance that his sins are pardoned, and his person accepted, and salvation and eternal life secured to him. Nay, some go so far, that *we* must be able to tell the day, the hour, and the occasion, when all at once this faith was wrought in us, by the Holy Ghost, and when we first received the seal, the stamp of regeneration upon our souls. This is the language of presumption and enthusiasm, not of deep christian humility and godly fear—and is in direct contradiction to our Lord's account of conversion, as stated by himself in the third chapter of John: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

But besides the condemnation by our Lord of such pretences, the apostle Paul refutes them, when he makes the *evidence* of saving faith to be the crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, and of speaking evil of no man; whilst these pretended converts are found, not crucifying the flesh, but going about abusing and condemning every body, but their own sect and party, and doing all in their power to sow discord and division amongst brethren.

Can such be led by the Spirit? Their pretensions are an insult to every man's understanding, who is in his sober senses. Would we believe a man's own word that he was innocent, when strong facts were against him? And can we believe that a man has received an extraordinary call from heaven, who can give no other proof of his inspiration and change, but his own bare word, or positive assertion, whilst his life gives the lie to his professions? Matt.vii.21.

But, I ask you, is there need for any extraordinary evidence, any *new* revelation from heaven, that we are the children of God, and the chosen of Christ. when *he* has given us, IN HIS WORD, a rule so plain, a text so obvious, that he that runneth may read? "By this," says Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 35.

Finally. If faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by preaching, and preaching by the Word of God, where is the necessity of a *miraculous* call, of a voice from heaven, to assure any man of what he may at any time know, if he will try his life and conversation by these Scriptures? They clear up every doubt. They make him wise unto salvation. They write in large and legible characters, the future happiness and misery awaiting every man. They tell him all that he must do here, to inherit eternal life hereafter; and lay down rules and directions with such clearness and precision, that the *wayfaring* man, though a *fool*, cannot err therein. Is. xxxv. 8. With one uniform voice they tell us, that as the tree is known by its fruits, so is man by his works; and that every profession of faith will prove ineffectual for our salvation, but that faith which overcometh the world, and worketh by love; which manifests its sincerity by the purity of the effects which it has produced; and evinces its redeeming power by the holiness it has displayed on our lives. Every other faith, and every other profession of faith is vain and deceptive;—and wo, wo be to that man who puts his trust in it. But to him who possesses this genuine faith, the victory is won, and the triumph is certain. In the language of the Apostle, he can exclaim, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than *conquerors*, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 37—39. Behold then, Christians, the bright assembly, and contemplate the triumphs of faith! Behold them who, by it, have overcome this world: "Walking in white robes, and palms in their hands; crying with a loud voice, and saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever; (Rev. vii. 10; ix. 9; and i. 6,) for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

And the same honours are awaiting you if ye are Christ's. Even to those who are not, as yet, united to him by a true and a living faith, his language is, "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Heb. iii. 7, 8. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "To him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Rev. iii. 20, 21. Come then, and, through the faith that overcometh the world, secure this high honour. "Be *faithful* unto the death, and he will give you a *crown* of life." Rev. ii. 10. Amen.

CHRIST AN EXALTED PRINCE AND A GLORIFIED SAVIOUR:

A SERMON PREACHED AT FENWICK,

By the Rev. WILLIAM ORR,

Minister of the United Secession Church, Fenwick.

'*Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*"—Acts v. 31.

The exaltation of Christ is a relative expression, and supposes his previous humiliation. Though he was the Son of God, and therefore equal with his Father, yet for our sakes he became man, was born in a low condition, obeyed the law which we had broken, and by sufferings and death the most ignominious, he endured the penalty which our sins had incurred. For thirty-three years he led a most afflicted and sorrowful life, and then expired upon a cross. But God exalted him, because he humbled himself: "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." The text divides itself into two parts.

I. The exaltation of Christ; and,

II. Its blessed consequences.

I. The exaltation of Christ, properly speaking, consists of four parts—his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of God, and his coming to judge the world at the consummation of all things. We apprehend, however, that it is to his sitting at the right hand of God the Father that our attention is here called as distinct from, though not altogether unconnected with, the other parts of his glorification. And, regarding it, three circumstances are noticed in the text. 1st. The dignity to which he is raised "with," or *up to*, "the right hand of God." 2d. The character in which he is raised "a Prince and a Saviour;" and, 3d. The agency of the Father in his exaltation, "Him hath God exalted."

1st. The dignity to which Christ is raised. The expression, "with his right hand," does not denote, as some may be apt to imagine, the agency of God in glorifying his Son. This is intimated by the very fact that he did raise him, and we know that he accomplished this by his mighty power. But the expression intimates that our Mediator enjoys divine honour at the Father's right hand, exercises divine authority, and dispenses divine government in the universe, for the good of his church and the subjugation of his foes. This is a situation which no mere creature can occupy. The very supposition that it could, would tend to rob God of his incommunicable perfections; and the faith of such a doctrine, followed by corresponding acts of worship, would turn out the purest idolatry. "To the Son," exclusive of the highest angel, "God saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." I admit that the divinity of Christ being necessarily unchangeable, could not, strictly speaking, be humbled or exalted. But inasmuch as he took our nature into personal union with him, tabernacled for a time in feeble humanity, and veiled his glory from the view of man, insomuch was he humbled. And when his work on earth was finished, he dropt his lowly character, but not his human nature. *It* he carried into heaven with him; clothed in *it*, he gloriously appeared before God on our behalf; and, as the reward of his undertaking, received, at his Father's hands, universal authority. And let none suppose that *the right hand of God* in heaven denotes any visible proximity to the infinite spirit-like nearness of place in the case of a prince at the right hand of an earthly sovereign. No such idea is at all admissible here. The human nature of Jesus, indeed, requires a local residence. But who can describe his dignity and glory in heaven? Who can tell the honours with which the Father has crowned his incarnate Son?—the Lord of angels! the Head of the Church!

the Governor of all things! the Ruler amongst the nations! and the Judge of all! "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

2d. The character in which he is raised is here described, "a Prince and a Saviour." As a divine person, Jesus was never deprived of his royal supremacy as King of the Universe; and therefore, as God, he could never be exalted to a dignity from which he had never descended. But there was a dignity to which, as God and man in one person, he had never hitherto been formally raised, although from the beginning he had acted as King of the Church and Lord of the Universe. It is evident that the princely office of Jesus, as exercised in his exalted state, is very different from that sovereign power which he exercises as Creator and Preserver of all things. This latter prerogative is necessarily eternal and immutable. But the kingly power of the Saviour to which he is exalted, in consequence of his sufferings, is not necessarily everlasting and unchangeable in the same sense in which his power as Creator and Preserver of the universe is taken. It is, nevertheless, perfectly obvious that he was Mediator from all eternity, and that he exercised his kingly office from the beginning for the good of the Church, and the subjugation of his enemies; but this arose entirely from the covenant made between the Father and the Son, which required from the latter obedience unto death, as absolutely necessary to his being formally installed into his regal authority, and exercising the functions of King in Zion.

And as the nature of Christ's kingly office is peculiar, so also is its exercise. His law, indeed, is still the same immutable rule of righteousness which was inscribed on the human soul at the creation, and repeated afterwards in ten commands at Mount Sinai. But while the strictest justice is maintained in inflicting the penalty of the law on the guilty transgressors of it, there is also exercised on the one hand to obstinate sinners the most marvellous long-suffering; and, on the other, to believers the freest and most astonishingly gracious forgiveness, joined with the choicest spiritual blessings. Such a mode of administration to sinful men, under the government of an absolutely perfect, and just God, can only be accounted for on the principle that a system of mediatorial authority exists, in consequence of which "sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed" on unbelievers; and pardon, purity, spiritual protection, comfort, and eternal glory, secured to all the faithful.

But Christ is not only an exalted Prince, but also a glorified Saviour. We have seen, that as a Prince he completely secures the happiness and dignity of his people. But it is perfectly obvious, from the condition in which they are by nature, and the helplessness of their state even after conversion, that the most powerful means are requisite to accomplish their salvation from sin and misery. It was not only necessary that he should substitute himself in their room, suffer the penalty which they had incurred, and answer the claims of divine justice. All this was accomplished at his death, so that he acted as Saviour before his ascension. But deliverance from sin could never have been realized by man, unless, like the High Priests of old, he had entered into the holy place, and presented the blood of his atonement as the ground of his intercession. Without this concluding act of his priestly office, no remission of sin could be granted, no prayer heard, no gracious intimation of divine love communicated. He saves to the uttermost all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them.

Thus Jesus performs the most important offices in heaven. On the one hand, by his delegated authority, he commands deliverance and salvation for his chosen people, and pronounces wrath on the finally impenitent; on the other, he presents the blood of the sacrifice which he offered on Calvary as the plea of his advocacy at the right hand of his Father. In the former case, every foreign adversary of the Church is doomed to destruction, while believers are directed in the way of righteousness. In the latter case, the accusations of the law are fully answered, and all needed grace imparted by the great High Priest of our profession. Salvation, then, may we ascribe to the Lamb that sitteth on the throne for ever and ever!

3d. The agency of the Father in the exaltation of his Son is thus expressed: "Him hath God exalted." We are here carried back to the council of peace, and called upon to contemplate the agreement of the divine persons in reference to the salvation of men. But all our knowledge on this subject is obtained not from any direct account, but from the prophecies in the Old Testament, predicting the future glory of Messiah's reign, from the fact itself that he was exalted, and from the connexion which the Spirit of God declares as subsist

ing between his abasement and subsequent glorification. Hence we infer, that his exaltation, as the reward of his obedience, must have been fixed in eternity as certainly as his previous sufferings.

Accordingly the Father, representing the Deity, and maintaining the dignity of the Godhead, was bound to exalt the Mediator when his work of humiliation was accomplished; and this was done, as the sacred history declares. Nor let it be supposed that the Father is superior to the Son in any other respect than as standing at the head of the dispensation of grace, and performing the condition of the covenant of grace on the part of the Godhead, or that the Son was less than divine in his humbled state. The latter veiled his glory for a season, that the former might magnify the power and grace of the Son, and in his exaltation secure the happiness of all the redeemed.

Having seen that God exalted Jesus as the reward of his humiliation, and that he was exalted, not as God, but as Mediator, we come now to state some particulars regarding his ascension. Having continued forty days after his resurrection instructing and comforting his disciples, he led them out to Bethany, looked up to heaven, at once anticipating his glory and invoking divine grace upon his disciples, he blessed them; and in the very act of solemn benediction, he *was parted* from them—a mode of expression intimating that he ascended not by the exercise of his own power, which was doubtless infinitely sufficient, but by the power of another of the divine persons, who is elsewhere denominated *the Father*. He was subsequently *carried* into heaven—language still denoting a foreign agency, and intimating that, for the time at *least*, *he* was passive in this astonishing transaction. And who does not see amazing condescension in this instance of exaltation? The Father stooping to honour the sinner's surety to the throne of the universe, and with their Saviour, virtually raising all believers to the same glory in their measure; and the Son submitting to be exalted to a dignity to which he had, as a a divine person, an undisputed and eternal right! We come now to consider,

II. The blessed consequences of our Lord's exaltation. These are in the text limited to those benefits which the God of all grace bestows upon the children of men. The glory of God—the establishment of order and harmony in the universe, together with the increased light thrown upon God's character and designs in the view o. angels, are indeed important consequences of Christ's exaltation; but what chiefly concerns us is, that "repentance and for giveness of sins" result to mankind, sinners, from the exaltation of Christ. I remark,

1st. That the exalted Saviour bestows repentance upon the children of men. Repentance, strictly taken, signifies a change of mind in reference to past misconduct, accompanied by sorrow for sin, and a desire of future amendment. But while this is the common acceptation of the term, it is used here, we apprehend, as in many other passages of Scripture, to denote that regeneration of heart which the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the day of effectual calling, of which the following are striking evidences:—new views of God's law as holy, just, and good; its felt spirituality as reaching to the thoughts and principles of the mind, as well as the conduct; condemning every irregular desire, every omission of duty, all disinclination of heart towards God, and holy exercises. The effect of these views are self-loathing, self-reproach, grief for sin, as opposed to the divine glory, the honour of the divine law, and the best interests of man. This change of views and feelings, be it remembered, is as necessarily the result of divine grace, as the change itself is a necessary ingredient in the salvation of the sinner; and Jesus is the author of this change, inasmuch as he is the repository of that grace which effects the change, and sends his Spirit to apply it to the heart.

2d. Forgiveness of sins is also bestowed by the exalted Saviour. Strictly speaking, it denotes pardon or remission of sin—that act of God by which he takes away, not the criminality, but the guilt of sin—in which the penalty of the law is averted, and the punishment threatened is removed. This is an unspeakably valuable blessing; but it is not all that a pardoned sinner enjoys. He is accepted as righteous in the sight of God through the righteousness of Christ; and one act, called justification, accomplishes both: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." I conclude, that justification is intended in the text, because forgiveness cannot be bestowed without acceptance, and neither of them can be separated from gospel repentance. Justification admits us to the divine favour, and for ever frees us from the penal consequences of sin. Repentance proves our submission to the divine will, and begun assimilation to the divine image. Both are the fruit of divine grace. Both are esse

tial to the salvation of the sinner. Both blessings come together; it being always understood that God accepts the person of the believer before he can accept any of his services. He provides salvation for man, and afterwards gives him the heart to receive it. While God the Father, properly speaking, justifies the ungodly, it is the righteousness of the Son which forms the sole foundation of this blessing. Jesus pleads his own merit as the ground of the acceptance of the believing sinner, and sends his Spirit to work faith in all his chosen. To Jesus we are indebted for all the blessings of the new covenant, coming to us, as they do, only through his mediation. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This subject ought to be improved by all, but especially by the following classes of persons:—

1. Those who have good reason to conclude that they are already in possession of these blessings, are under infinite obligations to the God of all grace; and while you trace your salvation to the sovereign love of a three-one God, forget not that it flows through the channel of Christ's mediation; and while you admire this salvation in its rise, and progress, and application, forget not to pray for the continued communication of grace to your soul. Unmerited, indeed, was that goodness which wrought faith in you, by which you were justified, and which softened your heart unto repentance. But, oh! remember that faith needs to be strengthened, and repentance deepened. Faith still looks to Jesus, and repentance still grieves. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn."

Despair not, O believer! even of temporal good things. All power in heaven and earth is committed to Jesus. Will that almighty Saviour who has delivered you from the greatest evils, fail to remove the lesser? Are you afraid that you shall fall in the day of adversity? Lean on the strong arm of Jesus. He is the God of providence as well as of grace, and will supply all your need. His are the kindly influences of heaven; the rich produce of the soil; the lower animals which minister to our comfort; the hearts of the children of men which he opens as the means of dealing out his bounty to his own children; that health which ministers enjoyment and energy in duty; and to crown all our temporal comforts, that friendship which, like precious oil, soothes the pains, and mitigates the anxieties of life, all are the gifts of Jesus to his people. "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

2. Those who doubt their interest in Christ are here encouraged. Your very sorrow is a hopeful symptom. It is well that you feel your unworthiness; and instead of making it an argument against coming to Christ, use it as a strong argument to lay vigorous hold of him. Come to Christ as you are, guilty, polluted, and miserable. Submit to the righteousness, and cherish the grace of the Saviour. Live by faith on the Son of God, who gave himself for you.

3. This subject speaks home to those who are as yet totally destitute of divine grace. These are of two classes, the hypocritical and self-deceived. The hypocrite knows that he is not what he pretends to be. Yet notwithstanding your aggravated guilt, you are invited to the Saviour; and coming to him by faith, you are assured of a gracious reception.

Let the self-deceiver open his eyes to his true state and character. You say you repent; but yours is a legal repentance, which consists in a dread of the divine wrath, and of the misery to which sin exposes you; but such a repentance is not the gift of the gracious Saviour. It is the very essence of enmity against God—the dictate of unbelief, and presents an apology for the continued commission of sin. Such a sorrow works death; and is quite characteristic of the unrenewed man. Repentance unto life, on the other hand, is the tear that drops from the eye of faith—that sorrow which flows from a believing view of the atonement of Christ, and of the evil of sin, as manifested in the cross; and is recognised to be genuine only by the fruits of holiness which result from it. You stumble at the truth, because you do not love it; and, therefore, you ought to present no apology for your ignorance. But despair not. Christ is exalted to enlighten, purify, quicken, and save the most abandoned. Saul was breathing out threatening and slaughter when Jesus apprehended him by his grace. "Hearken unto me, ye that are stout-hearted, and that are far from righteousness, behold I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry."—Amen.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. W. H. BURNS, Kilsyth.
SERMON by the Rev. J. ANDERSON, Helensburgh.

THE EVIL OF PARTAKING IN OTHERS SINS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF KILSYTH, ON SABBATH, 29TH JUNE, 1834,

By the Rev. W. H. BURNS,

Kilsyth.

"*Be not partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.*"—1 TIM. v. 17.

I HAVE always, brethren, considered this as a very serious and *trying* subject, yet very important to be understood and practically applied. The charge or caution, "Be not partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure," was addressed primarily to Timothy, a minister of the Gospel; and, like the words of our Lord, "Ye are the salt of the earth, and the lights of the world," no doubt has a special and peculiarly strong application to those invested with the pastoral office; but it is evidently applicable, *so far*, to every member of the Church and to every individual. As in the Lord's sermon on the mount, the description, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men," follows after the *beatitude*, and applies to the same characters; so the caution, "Not to be partaker of other men's sins," in the Apostle's address to Timothy, must be attended to by every one who would not incur the penalty of sin, or who would secure the blessing of those who do good as they have opportunity.

I propose to set before you, in the first place, the duty here stated as obligatory; and, secondly, the several ways in which guilt of participation in other men's sins may be incurred.

I. The duty, "Not to be partaker of other men's sins," is to be shortly set forth.

Sin is a transgression of God's law. It is the guilt of an individual rebelling against God, consenting to the infringement of his holy will and law, or actually transgressing his law. It is described in our Shorter Catechism as either a want *of conformity* to God's law, *i. e.*, the *not according* cheerfully and fully with its holy and excellent spirit and tenor; or, a positive violation of its express enactment. Now, the want of love to our neighbour, the neglect to wish and to do what tends to promote his good, both temporally and spiritually, *is sin*, as well as the actual and positive saying or doing what is injurious to his reputation, or person, or property, or spiritual benefit. Yet it is too generally supposed by the thoughtless part of mankind, that they have no connexion, more or less, with the sins of others. They say, "We have sins enough of our own to answer for, without burdening ourselves with those of our neighbours. Every man must answer for himself. If others are led to sin by our example, they have only themselves to blame; for we never set ourselves up as examples, or claimed to be models, much less to be infallible." Now, here there are evidently several great errors in reasoning, which require a change of *heart*, still more than of the *head*, to correct. We are intimately connected with each other in society. No man can possibly live so privately and obscurely as to have *no connexion* with others, or any influence on their conduct or happiness. If any one *should* so declare himself, this of itself would be sinful—a criminal dereliction of duty—a neglecting to do his part as a rational creature under the law of loving his neighbour. Were others to act

in the same way, how could society hold together? How could the golden rule be observed? or how could our Lord's prayer, in many of its petitions, be presented or fulfilled? To love our neighbour as ourselves, comes next to the first commandment, and is like it, and it comes very soon into operation. Every one has a neighbour, nay, has many with whom he comes more or less into contact. A great part of the law of God in the Decalogue, even six out of the ten, regard our neighbour's claims upon us. The apostle James's definition of "pure religion, and undefiled," selects "visiting the afflicted and the widows," as one of its appropriate expressions, along with an unspotted course of life." James i. 27. And how large a portion of moral philosophy, and of the most approved books of law and of equity, refer to the mutual duties between man and man. Besides, few offences against the law of God, or against ourselves, can be viewed or described as quite distinct from any connexion with the sins of others. In the case of every individual, there is every day, nay, every hour, almost in every word and act, an influence exerted more or less on the state of others, either favourable or unfavourable. When we hear this, and think upon it, we almost tremble at ourselves, and are afraid to move or act, lest we should go wrong, and not only sin ourselves, but tempt others to sin. But so long as we feel so sensitively alive to our dangers, we are in a great measure secured against the evil. In this sense, "Blessed is the man who feareth always." It is right to cultivate such anxiety. It is good to remember, that we are of some importance, and that what we do is not insignificant or without influence one way or other. Oh! that we all may feel more deeply and habitually our responsibility, and that we may be kept from being accessory, either *directly* or *indirectly*, to the sins of others! It will be highly fit, and for our own benefit, as well as for that of others, that we now proceed,

II. To point out some of the ways in which it may be said one is "partaker of another man's sins."

1st. *Indirectly* we are partaker of others sins, when we do not use the influence, which we might and ought to exert, in discountenancing sins; when public characters, for example, magistrates and ministers, do not put in force the law of the land and of the Church against offenders; when irregularities are committed in *public* houses—as, for example, when the Lord's day is profaned in such houses, as is often the case, and the offenders are not brought to punishment by fine or forfeiture of license; when, in the case of ministers and church sessions, no notice is taken of the Sabbath-breakers, the neglecter of ordinances, the intemperate, the swearer, or absentee from ordinances, and when irreligion is not openly and decidedly discountenanced. Guilt is incurred in neglecting to acknowledge God as the only true God, and the Lord Jesus as King and Lord of all; and the vice, ignorance, and irreligion, which prevail among the young and the uninstructed, for whom *no provision* has been made, either of school, or of church, or of pastoral inspection, the crimes of the unhappy individuals, who are thus left to follow their own evil ways, will most certainly be laid at the door of the influential and responsible members of society, who ought, as in duty bound, to see that none be allowed to grow up in ignorance of laws, divine and human. And if the watchman fails to give warning of sin and of danger; if instruction, public and private, by Catechism and by preaching, is neglected; or, if the strain of instruction, and the mode in which it is conveyed, is not adapted to the capacity of the hearers; if the hearers are addressed in an almost unknown tongue, instead of hearing the word of truth and of sound instruction; if the trumpet utters an uncertain sound, instead of giving fair and clear warning, the sin of the careless and culpable violater of God's word and ordinance will, *in part*, be laid to the account of such unfaithful or remiss watchmen. In like manner, teachers of youth, parents, masters, and mistresses, who have young and inexperienced persons under their care, whom God and reason call on them to attend to and instruct, who yet give themselves no trouble about their charge, but leave every one to do what is right in his own eyes, provided only *property* or *life* is not directly injured, and whose only care is to get work out of their servants, and to make gain of their services, such do, though *indirectly*, yet *really* and *seriously*, participate in the sins of such neglected creatures. Alas! too few even of professing Christians know as they ought what responsibility they are under, and how great is the guilt of neglecting souls!

2d. That you are a partaker of others sins when you do not *prevent their sins*;

when a word of advice or a remonstrance from you, or some punishment or censure might prevent, arrest, or cure the evil; or when a small help or seasonable countenance would bring a neighbour, a friend, out of a dangerous or ensnaring situation, and you withhold that aid. When you could bring a person out of the ditch, so to speak, by a little exertion, by some little sacrifice of time, or of ease, or of gratification, and you will not do it, you certainly *indirectly*, yet *truly*, are a "partaker of another's sins."

It is granted that it is very difficult to serve some people—very difficult to be of any use to them; and that advice to some is like casting pearls before swine, or to tell a story to the deaf; to reason with an unreasonable being; to attempt to advise the headstrong; to bind the winds in our fists; to transform a man from being rude, and thoughtless, and ungodly, to become civil, and considerate, and godly, is indeed very difficult, yet not impossible. The neglecting to use the means which are first of all lawful in themselves, and which promise to be useful, or which have any the least likelihood or probability of doing any good, cannot be viewed as free of blame, or of all participation in others sins; for we are not to *suffer* sin in a brother. We are all, alas! blameworthy in this respect, losing many an opportunity through culpable sloth, through shamefacedness or false delicacy, or through fear of loss of favour, or being too prudent, that is, too indolent and self-indulgent to do duty faithfully and boldly; or, it may be, if the duty is attempted, it may be defeated of its aim by the improper spirit and manner in which it is conducted. Thus many a golden opportunity has been neglected or frustrated; and we, at least *indirectly*, yet really and culpably, have shared in the sins which we have not at least *endeavoured* to arrest and to prevent.

3d. Indirectly, yet really, you hinder a good work which you do not promote, or you partake of the sin, and cause the sin in part which you do not assist in preventing and quashing. When, for example, a person in a public station, occupying the status of one who has it in his power, and is justly expected to take a lead in every good work, yet neglects to make himself acquainted with such good work, as the church and society demand to be fostered and encouraged, and neglects to make others acquainted with the same, such an individual is doubtless, to a certain extent, answerable for preventing or retarding the good which otherwise might have been done, had such claims been considered and brought forward, and which another, if in his place, might have greatly promoted. It is not sufficiently considered how much good is prevented by a public character failing to bring forward the claims of religion and of charity at proper times and seasons. The people may truly say they "knew it not," and therefore have not had the pleasure and the advantage of aiding in some good cause, the aiding of which would have improved their own *minds* and *hearts*, and given them the honour of being "workers together with God," and of being benefactors to society. The fear of being culpable in this way has often, I acknowledge, led *me* to announce to you, my brethren, certain meetings, and to appoint certain collections, which some, I believe, have esteemed an injury, and a kind of attempt to rob them; while the obligation pressed on my own mind is *not* to conceal what I know, or to deprive you of the opportunity of joining in works of christian charity, by which God might be honoured, society benefited, and yourselves in the best sense advantaged.

The preventing of good by not moving in a good cause, when no other in the place *can do* the work which we neglect, is a serious consideration, but which too seldom is allowed its proper weight. When, for example, duties are not done because those who ought, it may be, *cannot* discharge them, through want of method, or enterprise, or strength, but which *another* might, with some encouragement, accomplish; surely the omission, and consequences of that omission, may be, at least to a certain extent, imputable to the withholding what is meet, or to the not calling forth the aid of others who, were the case known, and its urgency set forth, might provide what was needful for accomplishing the object. The vast disproportion, which has been allowed to increase, betwixt the number of the teachers, and the number of subjects of teaching—betwixt pastors, and the extent of parish bounds, and of the numbers to be properly watched over, and which disproportion has been one of the melancholy causes of the present degraded state of our parishes. Doubtless, the guilt of this must be laid at some door, or rather at more than one door. A professedly christian and protestant government is culpable which allowed such a state of things to

exist, without devising any remedy. Those landholders, too, who instead of seeing the duty, and wishing to provide means of instruction, have generally done what they could to shift it from themselves; the Church, as a body, in not making louder, and more urgent, and more frequent demands; the people, who have not felt the evil as they ought, nor called, nor petitioned, nor offered to do any thing to remedy it, but have ceased to desire the bread of life, and made want of accommodation an apology for absence; and individuals in office of the ministry, who, though conscious that duties have been neglected, have satisfied themselves with doing little, because they could not *do all*, and have not made any exertion, or practised any self-denial in providing more ample means of religious instruction, must all be blamed. It has been truly said, that to the withholding or putting out of a light-house, is justly ascribed the cause of all the shipwrecks which ensue in consequence. The want of a sufficient number of labourers in a field, or of the crew on board a vessel for working and navigating, would certainly be allowed to be the cause of the unproductiveness of the one, and of the misery and loss of the other. Most assuredly, then, those are "partakers of other men's sins" who, having it in their power to alleviate or to cure the evils of ignorance and irreligion, allow these to go on without any effectual means of prevention or cure.

Under this head of partaking in men's sins by not preventing them, and of hindering good by not forwarding the cause, I am led to notice the laudable endeavour to arrest the plague of indulgence in intoxicating liquors, which indulgence has made such frightful progress, and which every circuit marks as the most prolific source of crime. When systematic and combined attempts are making to introduce a change of customs in this respect, to discountenance, and to wear out many of the absurd, sinful, and pernicious usages of society, in regard to ardent spirits, which have almost from our infancy trained us to the use of stimulants, and thus contributed to make us by degrees a nation of drunkards; when, instead of joining the band who are attempting a great reform, and by specific means of giving up the use themselves, and discouraging it in others, you discredit these means, and propose no other means, and do little or nothing in the same field of active benevolence for prevention or cure Surely you cannot hold yourselves guiltless in this matter. If I do not take advantage of the tide setting in against the dreadful evil, I work in opposite interest—I throw the weight of my influence into the opposite scale. If I speak against intemperance in strong drink, and yet countenance not those who are associated for its arrestment and extermination, I am like a person in a boat looking one way, and rowing in another. In short, when so many are pointing in the direction of reform in this particular, all hands should be at work, all sails set, and a stress made to gain the harbour. Let none of us be a dead weight, or keep back any from making their escape from the maddening, impoverishing, degrading, soul-destroying sin of intemperance.

4. You are a partaker of another man's sin when you take advantage of it for your own gratification or profit. When, for example, though you do not drink to excess yourselves, you make gain *of*, and are aiding in, promoting instead of hindering the drinking of others; when, though you do not smuggle yourselves, you yet purchase or use the smuggled and illicit commodity; when, though you do not steal, you receive the stolen goods. These are very plain and undeniable instances of participation in other's sins; and yet, alas! how many have gone on in such practices, particularly in encouraging the evasion of duties, which is just in other words, stealing from the exchequer, and throwing additional duties on others, and ruining the honest trader, and assisting in carrying on a trade which, of all others, is the most hardening and degrading!—for the smuggler follows daily, on Sunday and Saturday, as we say, by day and by night, a system and life of deceit and falsehood, always on the prowl, always skulking; neither giving God his due, nor Cæsar his due—a liar, a cheat, a Sabbath-breaker; readier every day for more desperate deeds; in a fury of agitation and alarm; a passion more and more insensible to all religious and moral obligation. Now, those who take the fruit of such men's dealings, and employ their skill and their hands, do uphold their sinful and unlawful doings. And yet, we have known even those who should have executed the laws, and those who should have been the most examplary in obeying them—we have known such guilty of being art and part in carrying on such illicit

traffic. Surely such cannot be guiltless, but are chargeable with no slight participation in the sin of the unhappy smuggler; nay, may be viewed as worse than he, as having far less temptation, and as possessing far more advantages to education and religious opportunities. How serious is the consideration that such renegades and outcasts from society should have it to say, that they were led on, and encouraged in their dangerous and fatal career by some of the most respected members of a community? Surely much sin has been committed in this way, most inconsiderately, and yet not, therefore, without much blame deservedly attaching, and serious reckoning on a future day!

5th. You partake of another's sins, when you set a bad example. It is well known how one follows another in society. Just as the footsteps of a very few, or even of one, over a field which has been lately ploughed, immediately induces others to follow, so that in a very short time the road becomes quite patent, so that no one almost hesitates to take it; so it is in regard to innumerable cases of practice among men, even when very questionable, if not positively unlawful. If such a one walks through the fields on the Sunday, why may not I? If another thinks it enough to attend church once a-day, or only once a-fortnight, why may not I do the same? If such a one sits a certain length of time at a feast, why should I rise sooner, or why not tarry somewhat longer? If an elderly person does such and such things, why should a young person scruple? If a professor of religion does certain things, why should not I, who make no great profession? If a minister or an elder does this and the other thing, much more may I, who am neither. If grey hairs are consistent with levity, surely the young and the sprightly may go almost any length in the cup, or in the song, or in the revel. Thus do sinners often reason foolishly. Oh! let us remember our responsibility for the example we set. Especially *have respect to the young*, and beware of saying, or doing any thing in their company which has even the appearance of evil! lest you not only be guilty of partaking of their sins, but even incur the guilt of leading them into the ways of folly, and of sin, and of ruin.

6th. The highest degree of participation in other's sins, is by *positive* influence. Are there any such aggravated cases? Yes, most assuredly there are who sit in the chair of the scorner, who press others to participate in excess, who laugh at their scruples, who taunt and mock their sobriety, and, it may be, mingle jeers at religion and the Bible with their licentious merriment. Such are causes of much evil in society; they are a public pest; corrupters of youth; and Jeroboam-like, have "made others to sin." This is the highest aggravation of the offence which the text guards against, the most heinous instance of partaking in other's sins; nay, it is rather a heading and ringleading in iniquity. The severest punishment awaits such, if they repent not; and, if they *do repent*, assuredly it will cause to them the severest reflection, that they have been thus the cause, or the promoters of evils which they cannot repair. Such should realize the ruin of many in reputation, in health, in body and soul, beyond reckoning, which may be justly attributed, more or less, to their ensnaring and corrupting example.

These latter illustrations, indeed, may be referred to the head of more positive, presumptuous, and heinous transgressions, than properly belongs to mere participation of others' sins; and the inference may most fairly be drawn, if merely to partake in others' sins is dangerous and culpable, and ought, by all means, to be shunned, how much more should we shudder at the thought of being "children that are corrupters," (Isaiah i.)—the *causes* of others' sins, as principals and instigators? It is not easy, nor, indeed, is it almost possible to draw the line betwixt the guilt of partnership in sin, and that of being the chief prompters and leaders in it. It is safest and best to avoid the solution of this question, by keeping at the utmost distance from every species or degree of sinful language or conduct, by studying to keep conscience void of offence, by being simple concerning evil; nay, by studying to walk circumspectly and exemplarily as the children of God, without rebuke. Especially, be careful and solicitous not to be in any way partakers of other men's sins, but keep yourselves pure.

Well may we, in the review of such a subject as this, adopt the prayer of the Psalmist in confession and fervent petition: "Who can understand his errors? O cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from all presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: so shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Psalm xix. 12. 13.

POPERY:

A SERMON PREACHED ON THURSDAY, 23D JULY, 1835.

By the Rev. J. ANDERSON,
Helensburgh.

"*So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications: and upon her forehead was a name written,* MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*"—REV. xvii. 3—6.

IN discoursing from these words, we propose to make a few observations on popery, its doctrines, principles, worship, government, and spirit. In prosecuting this design, we shall endeavour to establish the following things:—

I. That the Church of Rome is unscriptural in her doctrines.

II. Immoral in her principles.

III. Idolatrous in her worship.

IV. Blasphemous and despotic in her government.

V. Sanguinary in her spirit.

I. That the Church of Rome is unscriptural in her doctrines.

Brethren, you have the word of God in your hands, Do you find it written there, that the Church of Rome is the mother and mistress of all other churches? That the Pope is the head of the Church, Christ's vicar, and God's vicegerent on earth, invested with all power, civil and spiritual, in the exercise of which he is absolute, and irresponsible and infallible? That in the Lord's Supper there is offered up an actual propitiatory sacrifice for sin? And that in this ordinance the elements of bread and wine are transubstantiated into the body and blood, soul and divinity, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? And that the same worship is to be paid to these elements that is paid to God? That there are seven sacraments in the New Testament, viz., baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, and marriage? And that these are all equally holy ordinances, instituted by Christ, whereby grace is conferred? That there is a purgatory, in whose wasting fires departed souls are doomed to wander for years or centuries, according to their sins? That saints and angels are objects of religious worship? That it is lawful to make and worship images of saints, and angels, and of God? That sins are of two kinds, venial and mortal, and that venial sins are not deserving of death? That the Scriptures are insufficient, without tradition, which tradition is of equal authority with the Scripture, as a rule of faith and manners? That the Apocrypha is part of the inspired canon? That it is not lawful for the people to read the Scriptures? That, in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins, confession of sins must be made to a priest, who in that act is in the stead of God? That man has a free will previous to the operations of grace? That penance, the nature and amount of which is to be determined by the priest, is a condition of salvation? That justification is not by faith alone, but by works also? And that whosoever holds the doctrine of justification by faith alone, deserves to be accursed? That ministers ought not to marry? And that in order to qualify themselves for the holy ministry, yea, as an absolute condition, they must come under an oath of celibacy? That public prayers are to be made in an unknown tongue? That there is spiritual efficacy in sprinklings with holy or consecrated water, in wearing crucifixes, and in making the sign of the cross? That vows of perpetual retirement from the world into nunneries and monasteries are agreeable to the Word of God? That out of the pale of the Church of Rome there is no salvation?

Do you find doctrines like these in the Word of God? No! you answer, we do not. These, however, are the doctrines of the Church of Rome—doctrines which, with a blasphemous effrontery peculiar to herself, and which is not the least of her crimes, she

pretends to have drawn from the Scriptures; and which, as the actual and veritable doctrines of the Bible, she has palmed on the credulity of mankind. But if these doctrines, contained in her creeds and confessions, are not to be found in the Word of God, but doctrines exactly the reverse, what is the inference which we are free, nay, forced to draw? It is most obviously this, that the religion of popery is not the religion of the Bible; that though christian in form, it is antichristian in fact. We say christian in form, and this, though truly antichristian, it is; for, as has been well and wisely remarked, such is the infernal device of the papacy. This deepest conception, this mightiest achievement of Satan, that while it contains the whole canon of truth in appearance, it yet contrives to teach, and does teach, nothing but error. While it admits the whole revelation of light, it is yet a system of foul, pestilent, and total darkness, thus fit and ample a net it is for catching men; no partial error framed out of mystic imaginations, or out of the proud arguments of reason, or out of the licentiousness of the will, but a stupendous deception, and universal counterfeit of truth; truth in show, but error in substance; from heaven in form, but in fact from the lowest hell; a system in which the word of truth and promise is kept to the eye and the ear, but broken to the heart and the hope of man.

Such is the first charge we have to prefer against the Church of Rome! This charge we do not think it necessary to substantiate by the production of proof, or by the process of argument; for if these doctrines be the doctrines of the Church of Rome, and that they are so, we appeal to her creeds and confessions; then are her doctrines so obviously, so plainly, and palpably, and so positively unscriptural, that any attempt to prove them so by lengthened and laborious proof, nay, by the most shorthand way of determining points of this kind, quotations from Scripture, would not only be a waste of words, but an insult to your understandings. At all events, it would be most unnecessary. You are in possession of the Word of God; to it we appeal for the truth of what we have said, and to it we refer you for the truth of what we would have you believe. In this matter, though you were but children in understanding and in age, we would feel as if we were speaking to wise men. The issue we would be content to leave in your hand. "We speak then as to wise men. judge ye what we say."

II. Immoral in her principles.

When we assert that the principles of the Church of Rome are immoral, we do not mean to assert that they are so merely in their tendency. This is the tendency even of her doctrines; for of an unscriptural doctrine, the tendency is necessarily immoral. In so far, then, as the Church of Rome has poisoned the fountain of truth, she has poisoned the streams of morality which flow from that fountain. Does she teach, for example, as in the doctrine of purgatory, that guilt may be expiated, and holiness attained after death? Who does not see that the tendency of this doctrine is to destroy the necessity of seeking and securing pardon and purity here? Does she teach that some sins do not deserve death? What is this but to hold out an inducement to commit these sins? Does she teach that penance is repentance? What is this but to destroy, not only conviction that repentance is necessary, but to destroy repentance itself? Does she teach that Christ has committed to the Church the power of indulgences; in other words, the power of discharging from the temporal punishments of sin, not only in this world, but in purgatory, and that indulgences may be purchased with money? Is not the direct tendency of this doctrine to encourage those who believe it to commit sin? And who does not know that indulgences have been bought, not only for sins that were committed, but for sins about to be committed?

For holding doctrines like these, popery is to be held, not only as an unscriptural, but an immoral system. On these accounts, the mystical Babylon may be represented as the habitation of devils; the hold of every foul spirit; a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. But it is not only of the tendency of her doctrines and principles that we now speak; we speak of her principles themselves: these we declare to be immoral. Among the various orders of the Church of Rome—orders that have been instituted to propagate its tenets, and promote its interests—one, as is well known, was the order of the Jesuits. The history of this dreadful order of men, and of their gigantic conspiracy against the liberties and lives of mankind, it is not our intention to give. Suffice it to say, the avowed object

of this society was to extend and to defend the Church of Rome, to whose head a vow of implicit obedience was taken by all its members, that whatever he required them to believe, they would believe; and that whatever he required them to do, they would do; mind of their own they were not to have, nor will, but were to be an instrument in the hand of the Church, to be used by her at her will—a sort of papal police whose jurisdiction was to extend over the whole world, and the end of whose jurisdiction was to subdue that world, its altars and its thrones, its princes and its people—all they were, and all they had, beneath the authority of the papal see.

Instead, however, of occupying your time and attention with the history of Jesuitism, let us proceed to consider what concerns us more—the morality of the Jesuits. In the code of Jesuit morality, the leading doctrine was what has since been called the doctrine of probabilism. This doctrine provides and pronounces, that in the conflict of two opinions, one of which is the more probable and suitable to the moral law, and the other is the more favourable to private personal desires and purposes, the doubter is held justifiable in adopting the more convenient side, that is, the opinion most favourable to his own private purposes. The leading feature of this doctrine, is evidently the adaptation and subordination of all principle to expediency, the convenience of the party, place and time.

"A doctrine," says an able anonymous writer, "so monstrous, and opening so vast a channel for all kinds of iniquity, the establishment of which would palpably break down at once all the barriers of the moral world, make law, religion, and the general conventional honesty of mankind a burlesque, leaving all things at the mercy of a prejudiced understanding, or a corrupted conscience, might be considered at first sight, as a moral impossibility." The grossness of a doctrine, however, does not always imply its exclusion from either the theory or practice of a criminal age. The heinousness of the charge against Jesuitism, is no evidence against its truth. And there is tremendous proof that whatever may be the guilt of the principle, it has been sustained by the guilt of the practice.

Of Jesuitic morality let us notice the following instances:—In their creeds, confessions, and other works of authority, we find such doctrines propounded as these:—

1. That clergymen are not subject to secular princes.

2. That a man proscribed and outlawed by a temporal prince, may not be killed out of his territories; but that a man who is proscribed by the Pope, may be killed in any part of the world, because his jurisdiction extends over all.

3. That considering justice simply in itself, a judge may lawfully take a sum of money to give sentence for which of the parties he pleases, when both have equal right.

4. That according to a probable opinion, deciding that a tax imposed upon merchandise is not just, it is lawful for a man to use false weights; and that if he be charged with so doing, he may deny it by oath, making use of equivocal expressions when he is brought upon interrogatories before a judge.

5. That a son who lives with his father, may exact a certain recompense for his services; and that in case his father refuse to give him any, he may, with a safe conscience, steal from his father.

6. That he who has a will to command all the venial sins that are, does not sin mortally.

7. That if an infidel find any thing of probability in his religion, he is not obliged to renounce it, and embrace the christian religion.

8. That in order to receive remission of sins, it is not necessary that a man at the point of death should have a desire, if God were to spare him, of reforming his life; and that by the absolution of the priest, he may obtain remission of sins, though he be in such a state of mind as to be confident, that if he were to recover, he would neither confess his sins, nor forsake them.

9. That it is lawful to swear with a mental reservation; that to make use of amphibology, that is, a double meaning in swearing, is committing no wrong, and not always perjury; for that only is a lie which is in opposition to the thoughts of the speaker himself, as he is only obliged to make his words accord with his own thoughts, and not with those of his hearers; whoever, therefore, makes use of words of a double meaning, cannot be said to speak against his own thoughts, because he only takes these words in his own sense; what he says, therefore, is no lie, and consequently, it is not wrong, speaking thus, the lie alone constituting the wrong. To illustrate this by

an example: if a prisoner be asked whether he have committed the crime he stands accused of, he may safely deny it, provided he means that he had not committed it since he was in prison; or if he is asked about his accomplices, he may deny having had any, provided he himself means only those crimes he has committed alone.

10. That it is not a mortal sin for ministers to preach out of vain glory.

11. That it is not a mortal sin to accept a challenge, and to kill the challenger.

12. That servants who are not content with their wages, may advance them themselves by filching and purloining as much from their masters as they imagine necessary to make their wages proportionable to their services.

13. That if your enemy has some intention of doing you an injury, you may put him to death, not out of hatred, but to prevent the injury.

14. That it is lawful for the member of a religious order to kill his detractor, or one who threatens to divulge the scandalous crimes of his community, when there is no means left to prevent him from doing it; for if it is lawful to kill a man who would take away our life, it is equally lawful to kill a man who would take away our honour.

15. That a bankrupt may retain as much of his goods, as may enable him to live handsomely.

16. That we may lawfully take that which we believe would be given us, if it were asked; nor are we bound to make restitution of it, though we were to discover that it would not.

17. That the revolt of a cleric against a king is not high treason, because he is not the subject of a king.

18. That subjects are not bound to obey princes who have rejected the Catholic faith.

19. That the most criminal action cannot offend God, nor be obnoxious to his justice, provided the perpetrator is unacquainted with God, or does not think of him at the moment.

20. That if the primitive Christians did not depose the Roman emperor, it was because they had not sufficient power.

Such are twenty instances of jesuit morality! most of which we have taken from the Provincial Letters of Pascal. It has been said that Pascal, himself a papist, has dealt unfairly with the Jesuits and there is one sense in which it may be conceded that he has.—Their principles he has charged upon the Jesuits, as if they alone were guilty of holding them; whereas, they were held and practised by other orders, as well as the jesuitic. So that it is not on the Jesuits only that the condemnation should fall, nor upon any individual order, but upon the Church of Rome herself, in whose service they were all equally engaged—that Church which adopted their lying legends, sanctioned their immoral principles, applauded and rewarded their nefandous crimes. And whether it were to harden wicked hearts, or to pervert weak heads; to plot against the lives of sovereigns, or the liberties of states; to organize conspiracies against the Protestants, or missions to the heathen; to deceive the weak, or to destroy the strong; to minister in the light, or to murder in the dark, sent them forth in her name, and on her work!

As to the doctrines themselves, examples of which we have now given—doctrines in which vice of every kind, sins against God, and crimes against man—theft, treason, treachery, falsehood, perjury, and murder, are not only palliated, but in certain circumstances actually enjoined, it is surely not necessary that we should dwell upon their character.

Such are the principles which the code of jesuit morality contain! and which, with guilty consistency, Jesuits have taught and practised! such the immoral principles planted and propagated by an order of the Romish Church, several of whose establishments exist in our own country at this hour, exist not only by sufferance, but which, in rash contempt of all experience, and strange contempt of all consistency, though the enemies of morality and religion, and though the sworn enemies of our protestant cause and country, have actually been encouraged to fix an interest in British soil, and to pollute with the basest principles of popery, the borders of a land which we had hoped protestantism had chosen for her own.*

And if such be the principles of the Romish Church, which, if we have "writ her annals true," they are, are we not fully entitled to declare and to denounce her as an immoral Church? immoral, not only in the tendency of her doctrines in weakening, as she does, the lofty and vigorous motives of the Gospel to holiness, in turning the

* Foreign Review for 1828.

truth by which man is appointed to be sanctified and saved, into "a lie," which, instead of sanctifying, pollutes; instead of saving, destroys: immoral, not only in shutting up the fountain which heaven has opened for sin and uncleanness: immoral, not only in the tendency of her institutions: immoral, not only in her practices—practices at which she has not only winked and connived, but which she has created and cherished—but immoral in her principles. For, confounding, obscuring, and defying the law of God, wherever she has found it, whether written in the heart of man by the finger of nature, or on the tables of Moses, or the cross of Christ by the finger of revelation, she has propounded and propagated principles of her own, in which darkness is put for light, bitter for sweet; and by a strange pretence for the interests of *good*, her disciples are actually taught and trained to do *evil*. On all these accounts, we ask again, are we not fully entitled to proclaim and to proscribe her as an immoral Church? Thus is she described, and thus is she dealt with in the Word of God. Hence, in the representations of prophecy, she appears as a woman, having in her hand a golden cup, full of pollutions; and hence the name, written on her brow, the indelible brand of her sin and shame, is not only MYSTERY of INIQUITY, but MOTHER of ABOMINATIONS.

III. Idolatrous in her worship.

Nothing can be conceived more inconsistent with the simple form of divine worship, exemplified in the New Testament, and in the history of the primitive churches, than the ritual of the Romish Church. Had she been desirous of forming a ritual merely to please the natural taste of man, she could not have invented any thing better adapted for the end. In her solemn temples, her majestic altars, her sculptured shrines, her windows and walls covered with the most exquisite productions of the painter, the gorgeous raiment of her priests, the solemn trains in which they move, and the jewelled mitres which they wear—the most awful veritics of religion, pictured not only on the canvass, presented not only on the sculptured stone, but acted as on a stage; the flow and the fall of music, in its sublimest strains and its sweetest varieties; her consecrated signs and mysterious symbols; and, in short, in the whole of her varied ritual there is much that is fitted not only to please the eye, to woo the ear, and to rivet the attention, but to move the mind and melt the heart. Splendid, however, though her ritual be, it has this fatal fault. It is not scriptural, nor, indeed, is it rational. Come we to the house of God to have our senses gratified and our natural tastes pleased with sweet sounds and with splendid shows? How far, indeed, it may be proper to employ the art and device of man in the worship of God we do not inquire. Certain it is they often defeat the end they are intended to subserve. Devotion is encumbered by the very splendour that surrounds her, and the incense wastes itself on the earth, that is vainly thought rises to heaven. In the worship of God it is written, "Bodily service profiteth little." Yes, brethren, little. The feelings may be excited, and the fancy may be gratified; the worshipper may be moved to wonder, or melted to weep; but what if the sinner has not been convinced of his sin and his misery; if his mind has not been enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; if his will has not been renewed; if his affections have not been sanctified; if his heart has not been changed? What if the altar, before which he worships, wonders, and weeps, be an altar to the UNKNOWN GOD? What if Christ be not preached; if God be not glorified; if souls be not saved? What will all avail? Yet, by arts and devices like these, by her splendid, but unscriptural ritual, something has been done. Alas! must we say, that to the Church of Rome that something is all.* Her temples are crowded, the shrines are enriched, the church has her votaries, and the priest has his gains. But dare we to wish them joy at the number of the one, or the value of the other? No. By these, indeed, they have gained the wonder and the wealth of the world; but for that wonder and that wealth they have periled, yea, shipwrecked the souls of men. Well, however, for the Church of Rome were it if her worship were inconsistent only with the simplicity and spirituality of the New Testament Church. But it is worse; it is IDOLATROUS. Wherein does this appear? It will appear if we consider the objects of her worship, and the mode of her worship.

1. The objects of her worship.

God only is the proper object of worship.

* For some excellent remarks on this subject, see the "Crawford Sermon," by the Rev. Mr. Munro, now of Manchester.

Him only, it is written, shall we serve. But does the Church of Rome worship other objects besides God? It is undeniable that she does, and as undeniable that she teaches the duty of so doing. What are the objects she worships?—saints, and angels. To departed saints, to angels, her members ascribe the attributes of God. In them they repose the trust, which ought to be reposed in God only. From them they ask those blessings which God only can confer. All this they do in their prayers and invocations, addressed to saints and angels. Of these prayers and invocations take the following as an example, which we have taken from a book of devotion, entitled "a Manual of Prayer," and which has the authoritative sanction of a popish bishop. It is termed a confite for general confession, and runs thus:—

"I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my fault; therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, blessed Michael, the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, and all the saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me." In this prayer you see, as has been properly observed, that the names of the Virgin Mary and all the saints are united with that of GOD HIMSELF in the very same act of devotion. Confession of sin is here made to God and to the saints in the same words and in the same breath. Is not this grossly idolatrous? What other language than this could we expect men to use if they considered the saints as actually the partners of His throne? You will observe farther, that in this confession of sins, in this prayer for forgiveness, the name of Christ is not so much as mentioned; that there is distinct mention made of the intercession of the saints; but of Christ's none whatever, no more than if he did not live to make intercession, or if his intercession were of no value. Is not this impiety and idolatry of a gross and awful kind? If, in the former part of this confession, the names of the saints are impiously and idolatrously connected with that of God, is it not still more evident, that in the concluding part they are exalted into the place of the only Mediator Jesus Christ, who is actually dethroned in order to make room for them?*

Let us take another example:—"Protect us from our enemies, and receive us at the hour of death; grant us strength against our enemies; loose the bands of the guilty; bring light to the blind; avert all evil from us; demand all good for us."† To whom are these supplications addressed? to God? No; to the Virgin Mary, and that too under the blasphemous titles of "Mother of Mercy, and Mother of Grace." Is not this idolatry?

Nor are prayers addressed to saints and angels vocally, but mentally also. Is not this to ascribe to them the attributes of omnipresence and omniscience? Is not this blasphemy? Thus, by asking them to do or to give in their behalf what God only can do or give, they ask them to exercise attributes absolutely divine; while, to preserve consistency, they invest with the attributes of the Deity the creatures whose presence they invoke, and whose aid they implore. We are aware, that, to evade a charge, the awfulness of which they dare not deny, the Romanists have invented a distinction of worship into supreme and subordinate. The distinction is absurd; nor is there more propriety in the phrase, subordinate worship, than there would be in that of a subordinate God. Miserable evasion! when, to avoid the appearance of idolatry, we are forced to rush into absolute absurdity. Thus do we fasten the charge of idolatry on the Church of Rome; for thus does she worship the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for ever; nor consider only the objects of her worship, but the mode of her worship by images. That she practises and enjoins image-worship, that is the worship of the image, has been denied. But grant that she does not worship the image, but the person whom the image is intended to represent, yet this defence, even if true, would not save her from the crime and the charge of idolatry: for observe,

1. The making an image of any thing in heaven above, or on earth beneath, and above all, of God, is absolutely forbidden.

2. The worshipping of God by an image

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* See Protestant Journal.

† For additional examples, see Dr. Burns' Letter to Dr Chalmers, which, if reprinted in a different form, from the merits of the work and the known talents of the author, would, we think, be of service at present.

is idolatry. This is evident from the wership in the wilderness of the golden calf. The worshippers of the golden calf, without distinction and without exception, are termed and were treated as idolaters, though it is certain they did not worship, nor mean to worship, the calf itself, but God, by means of the calf—an Egyptian symbol and image of the Deity. This we might easily make good; but as there is no likelihood of its being controverted, it were only to trespass upon your time to attempt it. Grant, then, that the Romanists do not worship their images of the divine Being, but the divine Being in and through them, they are idolaters notwithstanding. But it is not true that they worship the person only and not the image. Many of their own writers have avowed that they worship the image itself. "The same reverence," says an old popish writer, "is to be given to the image of Christ that is given to Christ himself." "The cross," says another, "is to be worshipped as well as him that was crucified thereon." Hence in their prayers they address the cross as if it were a God. That the Church of Rome was conscious her image-making and her image-worship was contrary to Scripture, is evident from her treatment of Scripture. The second commandment, in which all image-making and image-worship is plainly and pointedly condemned, was expunged by her for a time from the decalogue; and though now restored, its form is so altered, as to obscure its meaning, and to neutralize the force of its testimony. Thus, by their treatment of this commandment, showing that while they have found it necessary to restore it, it would serve their purpose more effectually, and please them more as image-makers and image-worshippers, could they with safety expunge it. While touching, however lightly, on the idolatry of the Church of Rome, it may be proper to advert to their adoration of the host or consecrated wafer. This, transubstantiated as they believe into the person of Christ, it is well known they adore. To us who do not believe in the power of a priest to deify a piece of bread, the adoration of the host is the WORSHIP OF A WAFER; and this wafer-worship, what it is well termed in the Church of England Liturgy, an act of "idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians." Thus, by the prayers she offers to departed saints and angels, by ascribing to them the attributes, and invoking them to exercise the powers of the divine Being; by associating them with the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, in the office of Mediator between God and man; by making and worshipping of images; by the worship of a wafer, not as the representation of God, but as God himself in human nature, a series of as abominable idolatries is practised by the Church of Rome, as any ever committed on the most darkened stage of the heathen world.

True it is, in these chambers of "modern imagery," on whose walls dumb and dead "idols are portrayed round about," divine honours are not paid to the sun and moon, and the hosts of heaven, to the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan, figures which ancient idolaters made to worship them—to heroes and demons; but, idolatry equally positive and equally pestilent, divine honours are paid to angels and saints, and to their images. Yes; and as if when the outer "chambers of imagery" had been emptied of their idols and swept of their abominations, Satan, the master of their frightful revels, had said to himself, I will show to the universe greater abominations yet than these, a form of idolatry monstrous and mighty beyond all example and all parallel. Within these walls, on which the finger of Heaven has written BLASPHEMY, to describe on the wall without the nature of those rites that are practised within, multitudes of rational beings are to be seen bowing down, not indeed to stocks and to stones, as if "the Godhead were like unto gold or silver," stock or stone, but at the elevation of a WAFER; not as if it were a representation of God, but in the actual belief that it is GOD HIMSELF. Yea, that that wafer-created god is GOD THEIR MAKER! Of all the forms of idolatry, even among those of darkest and most distant times, is there a form more revolting than this—this which darkens the age in which we live, and pollutes the soil to which we belong. Could any "chamber of imagery" disclose greater abominations than this to the eye of day? Such, then, is another and not the least of the heavy charges we have to prefer against the Church of Rome. Such is another and not the least heinous of her crimes. "That she is joined to her idols, therefore hath the wind bound her up in her wings, and, because of her sacrifices, she shall be ashamed and confounded."

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Sermon by the Rev. J. Anderson, Helensburgh.
Sermon by the Rev. James Smith, Campbelton.

POPERY;

A Sermon by the Rev. J. Anderson.—*Concluded.*

IV. Blasphemous and despotic in her government.

Blasphemous when viewed in relation to God, the government of the Romish Church presents itself as a dreadful despotism in relation to man. On the blasphemy of the Church of Rome, manifest in the names, titles, attributes, and functions of him whom she denominates her head, and in whom her supreme power resides, we do not intend to dwell. Which of the prerogatives of God, however, we cannot help asking, has not been invaded by him who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, and who, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God?

Is God the source of all authority and power? By him do kings reign, and princes decree justice. This prerogative has been usurped by the Pope, who has claimed for himself the titles; and, in the absolute control exercised by him over princes and people, has given tremendous practical proof of his considering himself to be what his flatterers not only, but his followers have, styled him a god upon earth, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. On this point let history speak; for on this all history is eloquent.

Is God the Lord of the conscience? In this respect also has the Pope invaded the prerogatives of God. This he has done by setting up his will above the word and law of God, and actually claiming for himself the power of dispensing with both; forbidding, moreover, appeals to be made from his decision to God himself.

Ought confession of sin to be made only to God for forgiveness? It is made with this design to the priests of Rome, who, in the act of receiving it, regard themselves, and are regarded as God.

Is God only infallible, or those whom he has inspired? To this divine prerogative the Church of Rome lays claim, though on whom it lodges she is uncertain.

Is Christ the only King and Head of the Church, the Lord of both worlds, of the quick and the dead, the Sovereign and supreme disposer of souls? Are these prerogatives essential to his mediatorship and inalienable? And are all attempts to invade the possession of these prerogatives impious and blasphemous? Impious and blasphemous, therefore, is the Roman Pontiff; for, in addition to his invading the prerogatives of God, as the King of kings, as the Lord of the conscience, as the forgiver of sin, as the only infallible Interpreter of his Word, he has invaded the prerogatives of Christ—appertaining to, and inalienable from, all his offices—his office of Mediator in general, and his offices of prophet, and priest, and king in particular. How he invades the prerogatives of Christ, as Mediator, appears in the multiplication of mediators and intercessors, which is permitted and practised in the church of which he is the head—mediators and intercessors whose merits are pleaded, and whose good offices are supplicated more frequently than his even who is the only "Mediator between God and man," the man Christ Jesus, and "who ever," and who only, "liveth to make intercession for us." How his prophetical office is invaded, and its peculiar prerogatives, appears in the pretence that the Word of God is so obscure in its meaning, as to be unintelligible to the people without the comments of the priest; and then, upon this pretence, forbidding it to be read under pain of the church's displeasure; though, for clearness, it is said to be as a "light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path"—"a light in a dark place;"

and though the injunction to read it is both positive, plain, and absolute, "Search the Scriptures." How his priestly office is invaded, appears in the invention of the mass, which is, as you are aware, a repetition of Christ's sacrifice, as if "by one sacrifice he had not for ever put an end to sin and sacrifice;" in denying and anathematizing the doctrine, the foundation doctrine of Christianity itself; "justification by faith in the merits of Christ;" in the dreadful figments of penance and purgatory; the expiatory merits of the one, and the purifying fires of the other. As to his regal office, how it is invaded by the Roman Pontiff, appears in his exalting his own will, the law that goes forth out of Rome above the will of Christ, the law that goes forth out of Zion; his forbidding the Scriptures to be translated into the vernacular tongues and to be read; his ordering lying and loathsome legends to be read in churches in their stead; his daring dispensations with the divine law; his withholding the cup from the laity; his distinction of meats, and his forbidding to marry; his manufacturing of relics and images; his selling the very blessings of salvation, so that nothing is given and nothing administered—mass or marriage, baptism or burial, the Gospel to the living, or extreme unction to the dying, without an equivalent in money; his subordinating and subjecting principle to expediency; his not only conniving at, but actually licensing iniquity; and, in one word, the almost endless multiplication of superstitious rites and observances for which he has no higher warrant than his own will. In these, and in other respects, which it is not only impossible to illustrate, but to enumerate, it appears how the prerogatives appertaining to Christ, and inalienable from his office as the only King and Head of his Church, have been invaded and exercised by a weak and wicked mortal, who has been permitted for a time, and for wise, though mysterious reasons, thus to invade and usurp the place and prerogatives of Christ, to exalt himself above all that is called God, and thus to earn for himself the melancholy distinctions of the "Man of sin," the antagonist of Christ, and the "Son of perdition!"

Blasphemy in its relations to God, the papacy presents itself as a dreadful despotism when viewed in relation to man. The despotism of the Church of Rome may be considered in its theory or its history; it may interest and instruct us most to consider it in its theory. "Instead, therefore," in the language of a celebrated writer, whose admirable description of this theory we choose to adopt, instead of attempting a description of our own; "instead of attempting an historical synopsis of the steps of its advance, and instead of giving the reins to our emotions of indignation and abhorrence in the view of its tyranny, perfidy, and corruption, let us endeavour calmly and as concisely as possible, to set forth in its several leading articles the theory of this spiritual despotism—such aid may be gathered from the church writers of the times when it had reached its full proportions—a despotism which is now sixteen hundred years old. The THEORY of the spiritual despotism embodied in the Romish superstition, and fully realized during the middle ages, may be conveniently exhibited under five articles, each of which makes itself felt in every practice and principle of the Church, and each of which is a pillar, the removing of which would have brought the whole edifice to the ground. These articles we thus enumerate:—

"1. That inasmuch as religion is of supreme importance and of infinite moment, whatever directly or indirectly promotes or obstructs the spiritual well-being of mankind, carries a consequence immensely over the most important secular interests. The very least of these duties that are connected with God and eternity is, therefore, to be held greater than the greatest of the things of earth, nay, than all those terrestrial affairs put together.

"2. The spiritual well-being of mankind, or, in a word, the relations of man to God and eternity, are placed under the control of a visible corporation, the Church; and under a rectorship, that of its head, apart from whose jurisdiction there can be no safety here or hereafter.

"3. This control and rectorship is, by the express appointment of heaven, ONE; nor, in the nature of things, can it be divisible. It is, moreover, unchanging and perpetual.

"4. Every ordinary act and spiritual office, every decision or decree of this one rectorial authority, is infallibly good, efficacious, and, in the estimation of heaven, valid; and this notwithstanding the frailty, or errors, or personal improbity or impiety of the individual from whose lips and hands it may at any time proceed.

"5. The function of this perpetual rectorial authority, includes three charges, namely, the preservation of truth, of morals, and the disposal of souls in the eternal world."

How far these principles are true, we do

not propose to inquire; we would, however, subject them to a few remarks.

The first article, if properly understood, contains a great and sublime truth. If, however, by the interests of religion is meant the interests of the Romish Church, as it often has been perverted to signify, then this article thus perverted, contains a great and pestilent error.

The second is true or false, according to the sense of the first.

The third has been the trying point in every age, with the Papacy. Nor has it made out, to this day, a case to satisfy any reasonable inquirer. It is remarkable, that the evidence for what is there asserted—the supreme and transmissible authority of St. Peter, as first bishop of Rome, and rock of the Church—is defective, precisely in that part of the chain of proof where the firmest coherence is needed. This doctrine, though generally admitted, and stoutly affirmed in a later age, is barely perceptible, if at all, in the first, but dimly in the second, and it comes out in the third and fourth only, as the consequence of these political circumstances which made it the interest of individuals and of churches to admit and maintain it. This point, however, being once conceded or leapt over, a path was opened for bringing in all that remained to give to the occupier of St. Peter's chair—a command over the bodies and souls of men, absolute, irresponsible, unlimited, and unparalleled.

The fourth article, which sets forth the pretensions of the Papacy to a perpetual SUPERNATURAL EFFICACY attending it in every step and act, and which, in fact, proclaims that the Papacy is through and through, and at every moment, a heavenly scheme, existing by the aid of miracles, and embodying omnipotence and omnipresence. The doctrine contained in this article, is the core of popery; every other dogma and practice of the Church, is a portion and consequence of this one doctrine, a doctrine which, indefinitely convertible as it is to all purposes of sacerdotal ambition, delivered over mankind, without relief or reserve, into the hands of the ministers of religion. The Church having thus asserted and established its claims to an unbounded control over the human race, and of its supernatural power to administer efficaciously the absolute government of the world, it only remained for it to apply its principles to the duties of its commission. These are contained in the fifth and last article, which assigns to the Pope, as its supreme rector, the preservation and propagation of truth, the preservation of morals, and the disposal of souls in the future and unseen worlds.

1. The preservation and propagation of truth.

Enjoying the supernatural and plenary aids of the Holy Spirit, the Church of Rome professes to know, and to know only, what is truth. Her judgments are thus infallible. Others may err, she cannot. "He who only doubts" of the truth of her judgments, in the language of one of her greatest doctors, "is an infidel," and that infidel must recant, or be consigned to his doom.

Truth, or the interests of the Church, according to her first article, being of infinite importance, must be preserved, and at whatever cost.

The guardian of truth, there is but one course for the Church to pursue. It must not act as if capable of doubt. Better, if necessary, and if no milder remedy can avail, better that some hundred thousand heretics should perish in the flames, than that heresy itself, immortal poison as it is, should be permitted to infect the souls of men. Better that an heretical prince should be deposed, his kingdom placed under an interdict, and wasted year after year by bands of faithful crusaders, than that Christendom should be exposed to a fast-spreading contagion, which carries eternal death in its train. Not only *may* the Church resort to these, or to any other extreme means for preserving the truth, she is *bound* to do so. She has no choice. *Persecution* is thus a necessary element of her constitution, a principle in her theory, which, unless with a reserved purpose, a *faithful falsity*, she can never abandon. If she does not enforce submission to her dogmas, it is thus from no want of will, but want of power. In the same manner, she is bound to propagate the truth by these means; she is bound to preserve it with the sword of the Spirit first, failing that, with the sword of steel. The preserver and propagater of truth, she is the guardian of morals. After taking care that her children are nurtured with truth, it is her duty next to see that they bring forth the fruits of faith; or if not, to inflict needful chastisements. The magistrate may inquire concerning overt acts only, he may deal only with the life. The power exercised by the Church, is not the power of inquiring into, and dealing with, overt acts, but of inquiring into, and dealing with thoughts, motives, and dispositions. Auricular confession, thus, is not an accident of this system of despotism, but one of its indispensable elements, and a chief means of its

efficiency. The connexion of this doctrine with her power is very close. Pardon is lodged with the Church. The means of remission by penance, are also under the direction of the Church. But the priest, who in each instance administers this authority, can do so only by knowing the whole extent of guilt, and all the circumstances, as well of aggravation, as of extenuation. To expose the bosom to the priest, is thus the only way in which remission of sin can be obtained. Whoever, then, would escape the punishment of hell, must lay open to the Church his entire consciousness. To the priest must be divulged the tenderest, guiltiest, and most awful secrets of the soul. Nor does the Church claim and exercise all power on earth only. Her tremendous hand she stretches over Hades, and disposes of destinies in the eternal world itself. She is sovereign of souls. When in the full zenith of her power, realizing her theory in her practices, the wretched objects of her vengeance might have sought to hide themselves in the grave, or might have sighed and comforted themselves in the expectation of that clemency which the divine tribunal admits; but there could be no escape from the arm of the Church. The fires of purgatory were blown or quenched at her beck; her hand even delved into the cold sepulchre, and wreaked revenge upon the guilty dust of her foes; the torments of eternity were heaped upon her enemies, and the thrones of glory bestowed upon her friends.

Such was the despotism of the Church of Rome, as actually realized—"a despotism, at once spiritual and political, visible and invisible, universal and absolute—a despotism which claimed to itself the power of disposal over all that men had, and of control over all that they did; so that without the leave of the Church, or apart from her favour, there could be no possession or enjoyment of the goods of life, no marrying, no inheriting, no devising, no ruling, no judging, no speaking, no feeling, no thinking, no living, no dying."* Such was the despotism of the Church of Rome, once practically, and at this moment, if not practically, yet theoretically entire—a despotism which, to a great extent, is even at this hour brought to bear upon men, in various quarters of the world, and which, if not fully, is to be ascribed to want of power, not to any want of will; to a change in her circumstances, not to any change in her character.

* See Spiritual Despotism.

V. Sanguinary in her spirit.

Sanguinary in her principles, sanguinary in her government, sanguinary has been the spirit by which these principles have been applied, and that government has been carried on. Hence it is written in the words of our text "that in her was found the blood of saints and of prophets, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

The principles of the Church of Rome, we have already considered. These, we have endeavoured to show, are immoral. One of these immoral principles we purposely omitted then, but would direct your attention to it now. It is the principle and the proposition, "That heretics are to be punished with death." This hideous sentiment, it now suits, indeed, the convenience of the Romish Church to repudiate and deny. "This and other desolating opinions," they inform us, "have been forgotten ages ago, and are now the records only of bygone intolerance." With what truth these assertions are made, let us examine. In the year 1816, a new edition of what is called the Rheims Bible was reprinted in Dublin, under the authority of the Romish bishops in Ireland, with explanatory notes. Among these notes, we beg your attention to the following:—On Matthew xiii. and 29, which contains the parable of the tares, the comment is as follows:—"The good must tolerate the evil, when it is so strong that it cannot be redressed without danger and disturbance of the whole Church, and commit the matter to God's judgment at the last day; otherwise, where ill men, be they heretics, or other malefactors, may be punished or suppressed without disturbance or hazard of the good, they may, and ought by public authority, either spiritual or temporal, to be chastised and executed." Yet, "this and other desolating opinions we are told, have been forgotten ages ago, and are now the records only of a bygone intolerance."

In a Roman Catholic system of theology lately made known to the British public, the following queries are put and answered:—

"1. Is it lawful to tolerate the rites of unbelievers and heretics? No; they are not in themselves to be tolerated, unless there be some prudential reasons for their toleration.

"2. Is it the duty of the Roman Catholic Church to compel heretics, by corporal punishment, to submit to the faith? Yes.

"3. What is heresy? It is the unbelief of those who profess, indeed, that Christ is come, but who reject his doctrine as to any

part of it, such as Lutherans, Calvinists, &c.

"4. What are the punishments to be inflicted on those infected with heresy? They may be punished with exile and imprisonment; their temporal goods may be confiscated; and like forgers, or other disturbers of the State, they may justly be punished with death."

Respecting the work from which these queries are taken, we remark.

1. It was reprinted in the year 1808.

2. For twenty-seven years it has been the standard guide of the Romish priests in all matters of faith and morals.

3. In the year 1832, a new edition of this work, consisting of 3000 copies, being somewhat more than a copy for each of the Catholic priests, was published with the sanction and approbation of the Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland, to whom, with his own permission, it was dedicated.

4. That this very Primate is the individual who, within these few days, has so solemnly declared, that "this and other desolating opinions have been forgotten ages ago, and are now the records only of bygone intolerance."

5. That Dens, the author of this system, is not singular in his doctrine respecting heretics; that every Roman Catholic theologian coincides with him who has written on the subject.

Such, undeniably, *were*, and such, as undeniably, *are*, the sanguinary principles of the Church of Rome. The conceptions of the understanding are often revolting to the heart. Man has the capacity to conceive, what he has not the heart to contemplate, or the hand to execute. Has it been so with the Church of Rome? Has her heart shuddered to contemplate? Has her hand refused to realize, in palpable forms, the cruelties she has conceived? Have the practices of the living Church been mercifully inconsistent with the principles of the written one? Or, when true, even to her tremendous theory; when lighting up those fires of death, in which her victims were to be consumed; when preparing those racks on which her victims were to be mangled; when digging those dungeons, deep, large, "and horrible on all sides round," into which they were to be thrown, and in which they were to lie, till their eyes grew dim, and their hairs grey, and out of which they were to be led only to the scaffold or the stake, were these flames kindled, were these racks prepared, were these dungeons dug in a spirit of sorrow? No; but in a spirit of inhuman joy. They were not the martyrs of Rome pagan only that were butchered for the amusement of the spectators—

"Butchered to make a Roman holiday."

No; but the martyrs of Rome papal also. The cruelties of which they were the victims, were applauded throughout the Roman world, as splendid acts of piety. The consignment of men, women, and children to the flames, was styled an "act of faith," and celebrated as an occasion of joy. Thus, the spirit that "breathed and burned," not only in the bosoms of the priests, but of the people; that animated the Romish Church—and the Church was the world—was a spirit of blood.

How this evil spirit thirsted for blood, and how it was gratified, for it was never to be quenched, let the voice of history—let the voice which issues from the dungeons of the Inquisition, within whose walls of fire, unnumbered multitudes perished, unpitied and unknown—let the voice of blood, the blood of saints and of martyrs, which in every part of the world has been poured out like water, and which, wherever shed, like the blood of Abel, the first martyr, against the first murderer, is heard crying from the ground—let the voice of the souls beneath the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; a voice which is heard crying, "How long, O Lord, holy, just, and true, dost not thou judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth." Let these united voices—voices never to be silenced till their cry is heard—voices of blood which, though it has sunk into the earth, is not lost, attest how cruel, how sanguinary, is the spirit of popery, and how justly it is personified and portrayed in our text by a "WOMAN DRUNK WITH BLOOD."

Protestants, we are aware it will be objected, have persecuted as well as Papists; that they have we do not deny; their persecutions we neither deny nor defend. Between the persecutions of the Church of Rome, however, and those of Protestant churches, there is this difference—this mighty difference—the persecutions of which Protestants have been guilty, were contrary to their own principles.

The persecutions of the Church of Rome were agreeable to her principles. Persecution is no part of Protestantism: it is part of Popery. It is not only agreeable to her principles and doctrines; it is itself a principle; it is itself a doctrine. Yes, and let it never be forgotten: The millions of saints

whom she has slaughtered, the millions of whatever country and of whatever age, who have perished under the hands of her executioners, "were the victims not of a cruel age, but of a cruel doctrine," the unaltered, unmitigated, the unrevoked doctrine, that the truth is to be preserved and propagated at whatever cost; that heresy is to be punished and put down by confiscation of property, exile, imprisonment, and death. It is true that the practices of the Romish Church are changed, or rather have been changed. But have its principles been changed with its practices? They have not. We have shown you they have not. A change, indeed, has come over its circumstances; but no change has come over its creed, nor indeed can any such change with consistency come over it. There is but one change it is destined ever to know —the change of death. Thus, and no otherwise, will God "change its countenance and send it away." This change it has not yet undergone. In its death-lair it is not yet laid; its blood-red hand is bound up only; it is not cut off. The spirit of persecution is not yet dead; it is not asleep even; it is but coiling itself up; it is but collecting its energies. It is but waiting for the moment when, with surest and deadliest effect, it may spring upon its prey. The fires of persecution are not yet extinct; they are smouldering beneath our feet. Give them but wind and vent, and, as before, "they will rage to the skies." Whether they will obtain vent; whether Heaven in its anger, and man in his folly, will give it; whether the winds of political favour shall be permitted to fan them into a flame, we venture not to predict. Wo to us, wo to our liberties, wo to our laws, wo to our children, wo to our country, if they shall—if the arm of popery, now bound up, shall be loosened; if the Romish Church shall regain its ancient ascendency; if to her priests and her friars—those priests who to millions of our fellow-subjects at the altars of God are teaching the doctrines of devils —are proclaiming there that the rites of heretics ought not to be tolerated, and that the persons of heretics are accursed; that the tottering fabric of heresy is falling; that the Catholic Church is rising in glory; that the country was Catholic once; and, though blood should flow in rivers, shall be Catholic again—priests who, instead of hushing the terrific elements of human passion into the calm, are actually wakening and rousing them into the tempest; who, instead of quenching them in the waters of truth, sending forth the misguided members of their Church with passions which revenge only can appease, and which blood only can extinguish; if to these men the permission and the power shall be given to realize their Church's theory, and the dreams they cherish of their Church's glory, to realize which they are filled with quenchless longing and inextinguishable desire; then shall the tragedies of former ages be repeated in ours. Clouds of calamity, darker even than those of former times, will gather over our Church and country, and heavier waves will break upon our shore. Even then, we fear not, a banner will be lifted up for the truth; but it will wave, as of old, in the wilderness and the winds. The faithful few who rally around it will do so at the peril of their lives. New witnesses shall be slain, and once more the "blood of saints and martyrs" shall be poured out upon the earth.

Thus have we shown to you that popery is unscriptural in its doctrines, immoral in its principles, idolatrous in its worship, blasphemous and despotic in its government, and sanguinary in its spirit; and now, men and brethren, are these things so? If they are, then see with what reason we declare the Church of Rome to be antichristian! Popery is thus not the antagonist of Protestantism only, but of Christianity; and the antagonist of Christianity if it be, what are we to think, and what are we to say, of those Protestants who speak of it as one of the forms of Christianity? Form of Christianity! Is darkness a form of light? is falsehood a form of truth? is vice a form of virtue? is cruelty a form of mercy? is the worship of idols but another form of the worship of God? is destruction a form of salvation? is death a form of light?—then, but in no other sense, is popery a form of Christianity. Nor do Protestants speak of it thus only. As such they countenance and support it, building up the very temples which their fathers shed their blood to overthrow. Of such Protestants, we ask, what are we to think and what are we to say? This we must say, they are making themselves partakers of its sins; and, be they high or low, states or subjects, if they repent not, God will make them partakers of its plagues.

Again, is popery an antichristian system? Then it must be a system of destruction. Christianity saves. If popery be its antagonist, it must destroy. The great doctrine of Christianity, as you all, we trust, know, is the "doctrine of justification, by faith in the merits of Christ." This doctrine, by Luther, the champion and the chief

of the Reformation, was styled "the article of a standing or a falling church." "When, says he, "I came to know this truth, it seemed as if the gates of Paradise, till then shut, burst upon my view." This doctrine how has the Church of Rome treated! She has corrupted and concealed it; so that in concealing this great truth, or in corrupting it when she could not conceal it, she may be said to have shut the gates of Paradise on mankind. Thus the MOTHER of ABOMINATIONS, is the MURDERESS of SOULS. Hence it is written, that "in her was found not the blood only, but the SOULS of MEN." Thus the ministers of the Church of Rome, while they are by profession the ministers of salvation, are, in fact, the ministers of destruction. When we think on their treatment of this doctrine; when we think of the millions of immortal spirits whom, instead of directing to Christ the ark of salvation, they have shipped on the frail and fatal bark of human righteousness, to be wrecked and to perish; of the millions by whose death-beds they have stood, and whose "fearful parting" they have seen, to whom they have administered the unction of deceit, whom, though shriven by their lips, they have sent into eternity with the weight and the wo of all their sins upon their souls; of the forged pardons they have sold to departing souls for money and for price, when all the while they had, not only the TRUCE OF GOD to proclaim in their ears, but the PARDON OF GOD to put into their hands. When we think how this pardon they have kept back; how the record that contains it, they have even endeavoured to conceal, we know no language of sufficient strength in which to express our horror at their crime, their treason to God, and their treachery to mankind; as little can we find language of sufficient strength in which to express our gratitude to those who, at the peril of their lives, wrested the inspired records from their perfidious hands, and, as the gift of God, unrolled it in the light of heaven. In this light it has been unrolled ever since, to others and to us. The feet of those "bringing good tidings" have trodden our mountains, they have walked along our shores; their voices have been heard in our streets, they have been lifted up in our temples, of all which ye are witnesses this day; for to you is the "word of this salvation sent. Unto you, O men! we call, and our voice is to the sons of men. Behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to you, and to all people. To you is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." In this, then, notwithstanding our occasions of sorrow, and our causes of fear—sorrow for the past, fear for the future, the earth shaking, the heavens obscuring, landmarks swept away from the one, lights disappearing from the other; notwithstanding, we "see not our signs," and there is none "among us that knoweth how long;" notwithstanding we hear the "voice of our enemies, though we know not our friends, and the tumult of those that rise against us increaseth continually," we have cause of rejoicing, which may no man take from us. Amen.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH HE IS TO BE WORSHIPPED;

(PART OF A SERIES OF DISCOURSES ON THE SHORTER CATECHISM,)

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JAMES SMITH,

Campbelton.

"*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*"—JOHN iv. 24.

PROSECUTING our proposed plan of illustrating the doctrines of Scripture, and enforcing its duties, as these are classified and arranged in the Shorter Catechism, we had arrived at that question where the nature and attributes of the Deity are explained; and, in the last of our evening discourses, we directed your minds to the *benevolence* of God, as that benevolence meets our view in the works of creation, and providence, and redemption. It is impossible for any of these to be contemplated with a careful and meditative attention, without the observer discovering that "God is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his other works." Our very existence in the world, which is the consequence of the creative energy and protecting power of th

Almighty, does, apart even from those magnificent displays of mercy which the plan of redemption develops, exhibit in no unequivocal manner that the God who reigns in heaven and rules the universe, is a God of goodness and love. And that heart must be cold indeed, which, when these rich displays of mercy are made, does not glow with feelings of the warmest gratitude and adoration to the gracious being from whom comes down every good and perfect gift.

In endeavouring still farther to guide your meditations upon the attributes and perfections of God, I would this evening direct your minds to the spirituality of the divine nature, and the various profitable uses to which the doctrine can be turned in the practice and experience of the Christian. It is said in our Catechism, that "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." And, in the portion of Scripture which I have prefixed to our discourse, it is said, that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The contemplation of this fact in the history of the divine being, will bring under your notice the various items of his perfections and attributes which have been revealed to us—such as his omnipresence, his omniscience, his eternity, his unchangeableness, his power; and thus grouping these together, and giving them, what will be all that within the compass of a single sermon we may do, a slight glance, we will escape the charge of tediousness on this topic, and you will have concisely brought under review the character of that great Jehovah with whom you have to do.

The incident which elucidated the words of our text deserves your notice, ere we proceed to discuss the sentiments which they express. The Jews and the Samaritans, we are told in Scripture, had no dealings with one another. A bitter contention had arisen between them as to where the Deity was to be worshipped. The former declared that Jehovah had expressly marked out Jerusalem as the place where he would dwell; while the latter, with the keenness of bigoted attachment to form, declared that Mount Gerizim, where the tabernacle had been erected on the return of the children of Israel from captivity, should now also be the place where prayer should be offered. This was the bone of contention between them, and all who have read their history know with what unbounded animosity it was contended for. Both of these parties expected the Messiah; and when one appeared claiming the title, it was natural to suppose that they would anxiously look for the solution of the point which they had so long debated. Hence, when the woman of Samaria found Jesus, she naturally asked him to solve the question, where Jehovah was to be worshipped. To exhibit to her the universality of God's presence, he spoke of God's being everywhere to be found; and to explain the nature of his worship, he said, "God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Directing your minds for a little to these words, we shall consider,

I. The spirituality of the divine nature.

II. The nature of that worship which, being rendered, will be acceptable.

I. I remark, that "God is a Spirit."

It is a somewhat remarkable fact, that the Scriptures nowhere enter into a minute or elaborate demonstration of the spirituality of the divine nature. In no other instance is it ever mentioned, besides the present; and even here it was evidently not so much the design of the Saviour to explain his nature, as to exhibit that kind of worship which man ought to render, and which will be acceptable with Jehovah. And the reason why the inspired penmen never attempt to give us any proof on this point evidently is, because they look upon it as a fact identified with the very first conceptions which we form of Deity. You cannot think of God without thinking of him as a Spirit. Thus also the Scripture writers never attempt to prove the materialism of *our* natures. They look upon that as a fact so evident to our senses, and so abundantly demonstrated by every action we perform, that no evidence is required to be adduced in favour of it. And so when we think of God, we cannot for one moment attach the idea of materialism to him; for that idea is altogether inconsistent with the views we form of his nature and character, and altogether at variance with those attributes and perfections which are inseparable from his being.

It will be a somewhat difficult task, though the subject in hand evidently leads to it, to prove distinctly the nature of a spirit in general, but especially of that eternal and infinite Spirit who is the source and centre of universal being. The nature of God is something, brethren, which transcends our utmost comprehension, but something of which happily a little has been revealed, and just so much as our feeble and imperfect minds can presently grasp. In contemplating the character of God, as described in our text, the best way, we appre-

hend, to make the subject level to every capacity, will be to reflect on the nature of the spirits of men, and then raise our minds from these up to the source from whence they emanated; remembering that our spirits must possess somewhat, however little, of the character of Him who gave them being, as one cannot give what himself does not possess. And what is the nature of these, speaking of them apart entirely from that moral contamination which has come upon them by sin? They are thinking substances, something which we cannot see, which we cannot touch, which we cannot hear, which, in short, does not come under the observation and investigation of our senses. Yet, brethren, all of us are sensible that such a being lives within us; that it is the vivifying principle which gives life to this frame, fire to this eye, speech to this tongue, and warmth to this heart. But it has, we are assured, a much higher and a much more important office to perform than simply to give animal life to the earthly house of this tabernacle, and supply those energies which keep the whole system in regular and healthful motion. It is that which thinks, which reflects, which attends, which searches, which understands, which remembers, which decides; in a word, it is that unseen substance within us which performs the whole functions of mind. Still it has a higher office yet to perform than what we have already mentioned: it rises in adoration to the throne of the Eternal, and is destined to live during the ceaseless roll of a coming futurity. Such is the nature of the spirit of man, and remembering that it derives its being from the Deity, we may be able to understand a little, but only a little, of the nature of that infinite Spirit who rules above. Is then life in the universe manifested in a thousand different ways, and possessed by a thousand different tribes, from the little insect which crawls the earth, or skims the air, up to the great leviathan of the deep? is there mind possessed in a thousand modified degrees, from the most irrational and unreflecting creature, up to the noble, inquiring, aspiring intellect of man? is there existence enjoyed in common by the green herb which adorns the earth, and drinks in with its leaves the descending dews of heaven, up to the breathing and visible being of the animal that browses upon that herbage?—to what is it all to be traced?—from what is it all derived, but that Spirit which gives life and existence to the universal creation? Is there in man a soul which smiles at the drawn dagger and defies its point? and which, amidst the pangs of expiring nature, and the wreck and crash of expiring worlds, will live, untouched and unharmed by the thousand forms in which death appears? Greater far must that Spirit be which breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life when he became a living soul, and by whose protecting power the spirit of man is thus preserved in being! Greater far must He be who existed in and of himself for eternal ages that are past, and who will exist in and of himself for eternal ages yet to come; and from whom, as from a sun and a centre, the souls of men derive their being and their blessings!

By thus reflecting upon the nature, constitution, capabilities, and destination of the human soul, you may come to have some idea; and, brethren, it is all we can give, of that eternal Spirit whom our Saviour, in the text, tells us is to be worshipped by all his intelligent creatures—not by outward forms and idle ceremonies, but by the spirit that is within us, and with all the truth and sincerity of which our souls are capable.

It is not to be expected, my friends, that the proof of the spirituality of the divine nature can be conducted in the same demonstrable manner as the other propositions and principles of our creed. The fact must be argued from the known perfections of the Deity, and the necessity of his being a Spirit, in order to these perfections being possessed. We must look to the attributes that are ascribed to him, and from these reason back to the spirituality of his nature, rather than looking to known principles, and from these arguing forward to it. And you will perceive at once, that if the Deity be else than a Spirit, he cannot be *omnipresent;* he cannot be present in every portion of space, at the same instant of time; and then, instead of exercising, as we fully believe he does, a close and minute superintendence over every action, guiding and directing them all to the accomplishment of his own purposes, a considerable portion of the universal creation must at times be without his presence, his agency, and support. The result of such a state of things would be utter anarchy and confusion. When his attention was directed to a particular spot, who was to guide the motions of this terrestrial ball, and prevent it from rushing upon the centre of light round which it revolves, and to which it is attracted? When his attentions were directed to one individual, influencing every action for his welfare, who was to uphold you and me with the strength of his arm and the consolations

of his grace It is necessary, then, you see, for the actual existence of all things, that God be omnipresent, which character is ascribed to him in the sacred volume; for the inspired writers declare, that though they take the wings of the morning, and flee to the uttermost ends of the earth, even there they would not depart from the presence of God. His cheering presence and strengthening arm are visibly felt in every portion of the world. Yet if God be not a Spirit, and that too in the sense in which our Saviour said it—a sense which we at once acknowledge we are unable distinctly to comprehend, the thing would be impossible. And taking into consideration this single fact, there cannot, I apprehend, remain the slightest doubt on your mind that "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

To render this still more satisfactory, the *omniscience* of God demands also that he be a Spirit. It is a doctrine, brethren, distinctly taught in Scripture, and which all who have correct views of the Christian faith most cordially believe, that there is a particular Providence which oversees and influences every event in the history of the world, and the experience of man; and which adapts these to our peculiar circumstances, character, or condition.—A doctrine than which, none is more consonant to our views of the nature of the Godhead, or better calculated to convey the strongest consolation to the human mind; without the belief of which, the Christian would be deprived of a thousand sweet reflections, and a thousand motives to diligence and duty, which otherwise present themselves to him. Yet, brethren, to the truth of this, it is necessary that God be a Spirit; he must be everywhere present at the same moment of time, hearing, seeing, knowing all things. And is it not so? When you retire into solitude, God is there; when you walk by the way, God is there; when you pass through the crowded city, God is there; when you go to your closet, God is there; when you go to the great congregation, God is there: in a word, go where you will, God is present with you; God beholds you, hears every word you utter, sees every act you perform, and knows every thought you harbour. But in order that this be so, and in order that he may obtain such knowledge of our peculiar circumstances and condition, it is necessary that he be a Spirit: he must be so. I look around me in this house: I know that God is here—is here! he has promised, and will he not perform? but I see nothing but the faces of christian friends, of fellow-travellers with me on the road to the celestial Zion. Yet I address my God, as if he heard me; I speak as if he were my client, and I am pleading his cause; I act as if his eye were upon me; I am overawed when I enter the house of prayer, because it is said, "when two or three are gathered together, there will he be." And how can it be so, but that he is a Spirit, endowed with the power of ubiquity, and adapting his works to the wants of man.

It is no small matter this for which I am contending; it is one which warps itself with every part of your creed, and with every source of comfort; without which, the christian life would be altogether unbearable. And I ask you, are you willing to forego it? Are you willing to believe that there be no almighty Spirit pervading the universe, present in every portion of it, and as near to the weeping Christian, kneeling in his closet, and pouring forth his prayer, as is he to the bright seraph that burns before his throne? No, brethren; if I know any thing of christian experience at all, I feel assured, that every bosom in this assembly throbs with gratitude as they believe that theirs is not a God confined to temples made with men's hands; that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; that he is everywhere to be found, everywhere to be worshipped: in short, that "he is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, goodness, justice, and truth."

II. Such, my friends, is a short account of the spiritual nature of that God with whom we have to do: that God, let it be remembered, against whom we have sinned by numerous and nameless acts of rebellion. Yet let it be remembered with grateful feelings at the same time, that he takes no delight in the death of the wicked, but desires to extend mercy to them, that their souls may be freed from the pollution of sin, and admitted finally to glory. But he must be inquired of, in order that he may do this for you; and that, too, not in a cold, and formal, and lifeless manner, but with the anxiety of a heart that is really in earnest. And this brings me to consider,

2d. The practical uses to which this doctrine may be turned, as intimated in the conclusion deduced from the principle laid down: "God is a Spirit," and, therefore, "they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

And you will observe, that the direction here given, is diametrically opposed to the

forms and ceremonies in which the ancients trusted; and intimates, with all possible plainness, that no place is more than another, peculiarly the house of God; nor will our worship be acceptable simply on account of its being rendered here or there, unless it proceed from the real feelings and convictions of the soul. You are aware that the ancient Jews prided themselves much on the splendid and imposing ritual which was daily celebrated in their temple, and on the pomp with which their sacrifices and their prayers were offered up. And forgetting altogether the nature of that homage which God requires of his rational creatures, they trusted more in the splendour of their ceremonies, than in the sincerity of their devotion. With unprejudiced minds, but little is required to show the total unprofitableness of outward form, unless accompanied with inward feeling; for all must sufficiently be persuaded of the fact, that it is the soul, and not the body, which can render service to the Almighty. It would be derogatory to the character of the Deity, and totally at variance with all the views we have conceived of him, to suppose for a moment, that he ever would look with any thing approaching to pleasure or approbation on the humility of the outward man, while the heart was proud and rebellious; that he ever would regard with delight the seeming service of the body, while the feelings of the heart were devoted to his enemy. If the Deity is to be worshipped at all with acceptance, it is alike the dictate of reason, as it is the express direction of revelation, that that worship be rendered from a heart touched with a feeling of his goodness, and gratefully alive to his claims to our service.

I do not deem it necessary to explain at any length to you, the proper meaning of the phraseology of the text: it must be already obvious, that when our Saviour enjoins us to worship God in sincerity and truth, he means that we should render to him not so much the homage of the body, as the humility of the soul. And he deprecates, in no measured terms, by the mouth of his servants, that debasing hypocrisy—that formal service which, with insulting daringness, tells the Deity that we regard him not, as either omniscient or omnipresent. If for a moment you consider it yourselves, you will see that it is only the sincere worship of an humble penitent that can be acceptable with him. Tell me, whether do you esteem more the vain and empty professions, however profusely these may have been made, of the man who in his inmost heart detests you and secretly tries to injure you, or the sincere, but unpresuming and unpretending professions of the man whose every pulse beats with affection, and whose heart is altogether your own? I need not pause long to consider which would be preferred. There is a hollowness and hypocrisy about the one which makes him nauseous to your taste, and compels you, despite of your christian principles, to regard him with disdain; while there is about the other an uprightness and an honesty, altogether cheering to our spirits. And so, reasoning from small things to great, with what abhorrence and displeasure must the Deity regard that man, whose voice, while it sings his praise one moment, can at another profane his name? whose feet, while they can carry him one time to Zion, can also at another carry him the way in which sinners walk? whose hand, while at one time it can be lifted up in prayer, can also at another be lifted up in practical blasphemy against him? While on the other hand, how must he delight when he looks down into the bosom of the honest and humble christian, and sees it a temple prepared for his reception, where is a heart like an holy altar, burning with pure and fervent love, and lifting up a sweet and acceptable sacrifice! The affections of the heart; the sincerity of the soul; the conviction of the understanding, are necessary, and indispensably necessary, to constitute that worship with which the Deity will be pleased.

To induce us to worship the Almighty in spirit and in truth, there is every possible motive; and if we are aware of them, the listlessness and apathy of many professing worshippers appears totally unaccountable. You cannot think for a moment of the Deity being actually present with us, actually hearing us, actually seeing us, and yet maintain the indifference which distinguishes the sanctuary appearance of too many Christians. If you stood only in the presence of an earthly sovereign, your demeanour would be widely different, your whole soul would be wakefully earnest as to what was going on. And yet I have seen men that would scorn me if I withheld the name of Christian from them, and deem themselves deeply and grossly insulted by my doing so; who came to the sanctuary professing to worship, and yet after all, sat themselves down sedulously to think upon the things of the world, and permit their minds to stray far away from the topics that were discussed: and I have

seen such, when they stood up in the attitude of prayer which our presbyterian forms prescribe, whose eye wandered over their assembled brethren, and whose whole deportment were that of persons no way interested in the petitions which the preacher was presenting. You too, brethren, have witnessed such conduct. And I ask you, appealing, as I am conscious of doing, to men open to conviction—I ask you, Could such lay their hand on their hearts and solemnly say, I regard God as a Spirit, and I worship him in spirit and in truth? No, my friends; conscience would not tolerate such an injury. It rises, I am sure, even now within them; and with a voice of condemnation, louder and deeper than they have ever listened to, it cries, that such is their guilty conduct. And oh that that voice would never, never, cease, till, from being worshippers of God only in form and in appearance, they be brought to his house, humbled under sin, seeking a Saviour, and paying their homage at the shrine of Jehovah, with the earnestness and sincerity of converted souls!

My brethren, that God, who is a Spirit, who pervades all space, who dwells in every portion of the universe, is, even now, with us. He hears every word I am speaking; he knows every sentiment you are feeling. And if these be not the words or the sentiments of sincerity, how shall we answer him at the great day of judgment? We know our duty, what if we do not perform it? Away with that worship which is performed but to be seen of men! It is a loathing in the sight of God. Can he take delight in being thus injured and insulted? If it is worth our while to worship God at all, it is surely wise for us to worship him in sincerity and truth.

It is a common saying, but a true one, that we never properly estimate any thing till we have felt its loss. The child never values the parent sufficiently, till that parent is dead; and then, oh, what tears of regret! what feelings of remorse, as instances throng upon his memory when he injured and neglected him! Now he could dig him from the grave with the very nails of his fingers, if that would restore him back to him. It is so with the public ordinances of the Gospel, by which the Deity is to be served. While the day of life, and health, and strength last, and the joyous hours of prosperity pass on, we think but little on the house of God, on the preaching of the Gospel, on the various means of grace; and we will permit, perhaps, the idlest, and silliest reason to detain us from them, which we would not permit to detain us from our marketings and merchandise, or from partaking in the festivities of society. But, brethren, I shall suppose that such seasons have passed; that the winter of life comes; that the chilling influences of disease fall upon you; blenching the cheek that is now so ruddy; dimming the eye that is now so light; palsying the hand that is now so strong; enfeebling the limb that is now so firm: what would the diseased man give to have the privilege of even this night! What would the dying man give to go to the house of God but once, and but once more mingle his voice with the voices of his brethren in the song of praise! Such a time, brethren, will come; it is surely, then, our wisest way to make suitable preparation for it.

My christian friends, it must be consolatory to know, that our God is not confined to temples made with men's hands; that he is everywhere present; that the whole universe is full of him; that he is everywhere to be worshipped. Neither to Jerusalem nor Gerizim, neither to this place or that, need we go to seek him; he is found of us as we lie on our bed, and, amid the solitude and silence of night, offer up our prayers; he is found of us when detained from public ordinances—from the house of sickness our supplications ascend. He will hear the widow when, concealed from the world's gaze, her tears are shed; he will hear the orphan when kneeling by the cold grave of his father; he will hear *you*, Christians, when the shadows of the everlasting night are beginning to gather, and your feet are stumbling upon the dark mountains; he will hear you when, with the fear natural to humanity, and the faith quite as natural to the saints, you utter your last prayer, ere the soul be launched on the ocean of eternity. It is our glory that God is a Spirit, and everywhere present: and it is our duty to worship him in spirit and in truth.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN HODGSON, M.D., Blantyre.

THE HAMILTONIAN SERMON ON THE ADVANTAGES OF THE REFORMATION FROM POPERY;

PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH OF GLASGOW,

By the late Rev. JOHN HODGSON, M.D.,

Minister of Blantyre.

"*These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*"—ACTS xvii. 2.

IN the preceding verses, we are informed, that St. Paul, having entered the synagogue of the Jews at Thessalonica, reasoned with his countrymen whom he found in that city, no fewer than three Sabbath days, proving to them out of the Scriptures, that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ. A tumult, however, was maliciously excited against the Apostle, and in consequence of this tumult, he passed over to Berea. Here, too, "he went into the synagogue of the Jews," and it stands upon the record, that he found the Bereans well inclined, if not to receive the doctrine which he proposed to them, at all events to listen to it, and to investigate the truth. "These," says he, "were more noble than those of Thessalonica," more ingenuous, more candid, more free to inquire, more patient to examine; and he adds, "that they searched the Scriptures daily," in order to ascertain whether the claims of Jesus, so zealously alleged and enforced by his Apostle, were well founded or not. They compared the prophecy with the event, the figure with the reality, the anticipation with the history and the fact.

It was not to the doctors of the synagogue exclusively, that St. Paul addressed himself. We are rather to suppose that he took his place among the doctors, and taught the people. He spoke to the Jews who were present, without exception or particularity: and even the proselytes of the gate, who frequented the synagogue, were comprehended within the reach of his argument, and smitten by the power of his eloquence. Hence it is said, that many of them believed, that is, of the Bereans generally speaking, whether doctors or otherwise; and "also, of honourable women which were Grecks," and proselytes of the gate, as the commentators have supposed; "and of men, not a few."

The topic to which I very humbly solicit your attention at present, is the following:—That while the people of Berea, whether learned or unlearned, received the truths of Christianity with all readiness of mind, they tried them at the same time, and judged of them, by the standard of Holy Writ. In one word, they exercised, both as a community, and as individuals, the right of private judgment.

And in farther discoursing to you, I propose, through God's blessing, to establish or to illustrate these three things:—

I. That every man is answerable for the use which he makes of his understanding, as well as his active principles; he must form just notions of God, and of his duty.

II. That the Church of Rome has withheld the Bible from the people, and in this way, has withheld from them the *means* of forming just notions, on these important subjects.

III. That the Reformation from Popery has restored to the people the use of the Bible; and placed the means of adequate and correct information, within the reach of every man.

I. Every man is answerable for the use which he makes of his understanding, as

well as his active principles; he must form just notions of God, and of his duty.

This, indeed, is a very clear proposition; but clear as it is, it contains a truth which, I am afraid, has not been attended to as its importance demands. We have no scruple in admitting that we are bound to act rightly; but we do not so promptly allow, or so frequently consider, that we are bound, likewise, to think justly. We are intellectual as well as moral creatures. We must form right opinions, by the use of right means. If these means are put into our power, and if we do not use them, we must answer for our negligence. And farther, if we are not only permitted to use the means of information, but *commanded* to employ them with all diligence, and if we *still* refuse, we subject ourselves to a heavier responsibility, and aggravate the terrors of the judgment-seat; because, at one and the same time, we allow our opportunities to pass away unimproved, and resist the authority of Almighty God.

We must "search the Scriptures;" for there, and there alone, the means of information are to be found. We must search them, in order to learn what it is that God has been pleased to reveal. We must study them carefully, and meditate upon them, after the example of the Psalmist, by day and by night. We must endeavour to arrive at just notions of the great Spirit whom we worship; not thinking him "altogether such a one" as ourselves. We must endeavour to conceive aright, of his uncontrollable power, his everlasting being, his unshaken independence; of his inflexible justice, his overflowing goodness, and his tender mercy. We must endeavour to form correct notions of ourselves; as guilty, condemned, miserable, and helpless creatures. We must endeavour rightly to apprehend that plan of forgiveness and of reconciliation, which occupies so large a proportion of the sacred pages, and on which it may be affirmed that the inspired writers delight to dwell. We must address our understandings likewise, to form just notions of our duty: of the law, the universality of its requisitions, and the spiritual nature of a Christian's obedience. And we must take care, lest we should again be encumbered with the yoke of superstitious and unprofitable observances, which our fathers were not able to bear. Our humble supplication at God's mercy-seat must be, and each of us must offer it for himself, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end: give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." Psalm cxix. 33, 34.

It is the duty of *every man* to search the Scriptures. It is the duty, not merely of the rich and of the learned, but of the poor and of the ignorant. Will the rich man answer for the poor man, in the trial of the resurrection day? Will the man of letters, who is skilful in many languages, who enjoys much leisure, and who reads many books, answer for him whose harder fate requires him to labour incessantly with his hands, and who knows nothing but his mother tongue? Will the Pope, or the Cardinals, or the Councils, or the Universities, answer for the laity of Christendom? Have the rich or the learned, an exclusive right to the treasures of heavenly knowledge? Has not the workman upon his bench, an understanding to be informed, and a heart to be sanctified, and a conscience to be quickened, and a soul to be saved, as well as the professor in his pulpit? Must we not account for the single talent as well as the five or the ten? Hast thou received only one talent? Thou art not permitted to hide it in a napkin; or to fancy that thy Master is an austere man, taking up that which he laid not down, or reaping where he had not sown; lest, in the end of the world, *that* Master should say unto thee, "Out of thine own mouth, will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow; wherefore, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming, I might have required mine own with usury?" Luke xix. 22, 23.

"The Apostle teaches," says Wickliffe, "that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be answerable for all the goods intrusted to us; it is necessary, therefore, that the faithful should know these goods, and the use of them, that they may give a proper answer. For the answer by a prelate, or an attorney, will not then avail, but every man must answer in his own person."*

II. The Church of Rome has withheld the Bible from the people; and in this way, has withheld from them the means of forming just notions, concerning God and their duty.

I regard it as altogether unnecessary to prove, that when the Bible is withheld from the people, the only proper means of information are withheld from them. We must not receive "for doctrines, the command-

* Quoted by Milner; Church Hist. vol. iv. p. 593

ments of men." Mat. xv. 9. It is the Scripture, and the Scripture alone, (not the comments of the fathers, or the traditions,) that "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

But when we say, that the Church of Rome has withheld the Bible from the people, our meaning is, that she has chosen to shut it up in a language which the people cannot understand. She is not unwilling, it must be owned, to instruct the laity of any country, by addressing them from her pulpits, in the common language; but she will not, or she dare not, translate the Scriptures, into the vernacular tongues, and put them, without note or comment, into the hands of the public.

In the year 1517, Cardinal Ximenes, archbishop of Toledo in Spain, and first minister of state to Ferdinand, surnamed the Catholic, completed an edition of the Bible in various languages. This edition is still in existence, though it is extremely scarce and dear. I am not aware that there is any copy of it to be found in Scotland. The edition alluded to, was printed at Complutum, (now Alcala de Henares,) a town in Spain, and the seat of an university; and from that circumstance, it has received the name of the Complutensian edition. It is, as I have just stated, an edition of the sacred Scriptures in various languages, or in other words, it is a Polyglot Bible: and it may be considered as the first book of that sort that ever was published.* Among a variety of other documents, it contains the Old Testament in Hebrew, and the whole Bible in Greek and in Latin.†

I have introduced this short notice of the Complutensian Polyglot, with a view to make the following remarks:—

1. That though the Polyglot in question was published only a few years before the Reformation, and contains the sacred Scriptures in many languages, as the name implies, it contains no version of these Scriptures, either in whole or in part, into any of the languages at that time spoken in Europe. And as far as I know, the example, thus unadvisedly set, has been followed by all the other editors of the Polyglot Bible.*

Indeed, it was the opinion of Ximenes, that Christianity would then suffer the greatest injury, when the holy books should be translated into the vulgar tongue. This illustrious Cardinal, was not only a very great scholar and statesman, but a zealous and powerful maker of proselytes. He was particularly determined to achieve the conversion of the Moors, a people who constituted, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, a large proportion of the population in Spain. Accordingly, he gained over many of their priests and chief men by means of bribes. He imprisoned, and treated with the greatest cruelty, such as were of slow apprehension, or refused to believe. He burnt 5,000 of their books in one great heap. These were not only Korans and volumes of religion, but history, poetry, and miscellaneous literature; and no book whatever was exempted, if it contained in it any thing which related to the Mahometan superstition. A few treatises of medicine alone escaped the fire, and were laid up in the library of Alcala. But while Ximenes burnt the Koran, in order to convert the Moors, he refused to give them the Bible, or even the smallest portion of it, either in their own language, or in that of Spain. When the thing was proposed to him, and proposed to him *it was*, he would by no means agree to it; saying, "it were sin to cast pearls before swine." He affirmed that men might easily be converted without the Bible;† and according to his notions of conversion, it must be admitted that there is some truth in the statement. And lastly, to all his other reasonings upon this subject, the Cardinal added the following very strange one; that though some books of piety written in the vulgar tongue, might safely be used, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, "should be kept in *those*

* Unless, indeed, we regard the Hexapla of Origen as a Polyglot Bible. For an account of the Hexapla, the reader may consult Marsh's "Course of Lectures, containing a Description and Systematic arrangement of the several branches of Divinity." Part I. p. 5. Dr. Marsh speaks of the Hexapla as a kind of Polyglot. There is a map or specimen of the Hexapla in Pictet's Theologia Christiana, vol. i. p. 74. edit. 8vo. Lugd. Batavor. 1734.

† Hæc editio quasi fundamentum erat, super quo plura ædificârunt, qui editiones præcipuas sequentes adornârunt. In eâ exhibentur, Testamentum Vetus Hebraicum, cum Vulgata Latina; Versio lxxii. Interpretum Græca, cum translatione Latina; Chaldaica Pentateuchi Paraphrasis Onkelosi, cum ejusdem Latina Versione; omnibus per columnas dispositis, more Origenico. Testamentum Novum Græcum; sine spiritibus et accentibus, ut ipsum ἀυτογραφον melius referret, cum Latina etiam translatione, Apparatu, &c. Preface to the London Polyglot, p. 3. See also Marsh's Michaelis, vol. ii. part i. ch. xii. sect. i. Le Long, Bibliothec. Sac. ed. Masch. part i. p. 512, &c.

* Wickliffe's Translation would have formed a good addition to the London Polyglot; it (that is Wickliffe's Translation,) was published about the year 1380.

† See Marsh's Michael. vol. ii. part i. ch. xii. sect. 1

three languages only, which God, not without the greatest mystery, had ordered to be placed over the head of his dear Son, when he suffered the death of the cross."*

But I have introduced a short notice of the Complutensian Polyglot, in order to remark,

2. That, taking the Polyglot of Complutum exactly as we find it, an unreasonable preference seems to have been given, in that celebrated edition, to the Latin Vulgate. Even the learned editors of Alcala, appear to have viewed the translation of Jerome, that is, the Latin Vulgate, with a peculiar complacency. There is a well known passage in their preface to the first volume, which singularly illustrates the statement I have just made. They are speaking of the Hebrew Scriptures on the one hand, and the Greek upon the other; and they say, that between these, they have placed the Vulgate or Latin translation, in some such way, as Christ himself was placed between *the two thieves*, one of them upon his right hand, and the other upon the left.†

But the translation of Jerome, or the Latin Vulgate, was soon to receive a preference much more exclusive, and the sanction of a higher authority. This preference, and this sanction, it received from the Council of Trent.

As the reformation from popery advanced, and as the translations of the sacred Scriptures were published or sought after, and were passing into the hands of the people, a great Council of the Romish Church was held: it was convened by the authority of the Pope, and it sat down at Trent, in the year 1545. The propriety of giving the Bible to the people, or in other words, the propriety or the impropriety of disseminating the Scriptures in the vernacular tongues, appears to have been one of the first subjects which occupied the attention of this notable Council. Accordingly, they have promulgated certain famous decrees respecting it; and those decrees are the more worthy of our consideration, because they are still regarded by the chief advocates of the papacy, as obligatory over the whole Romish Church.

The first decree upon this subject was passed in the 4th Session of the Council. It begun by declaring authoritatively "that the Latin translation of the Scriptures made or revised by St. Jerome, and known by the name of the Vulgate translation,"* was AUTHENTIC. No doubt, it is hard to say, what the Tridentine Fathers meant by the epithet, "authentic;" whether that the Vulgate was the pure dictate of the Holy Ghost, because the council had declared it to be so;† whether it was only equal in value to the original text, of which it was a translation; or whether they meant nothing more than that it was a good and useful version of the primary Scriptures into the Latin tongue. And it is of no consequence to enter into this inquiry at present; because in the very same decree, they ordain, that the translation of Jerome shall be used and appealed to exclusively, "in all public reading of the Scriptures," and "in all disputations, sermons, and expositions;" and farther, "that no one shall presume or dare to reject" the said translation of Jerome or Latin Vulgate, upon any pretext whatsoever.‡

Let me beg your attention for a moment, to the meaning and spirit of this decree.

No English, French or German translation is to be used in the service of the Church: and far less, are the people to receive the Scriptures in their own language, as a gift from their instructors, and to peruse them for themselves.

It was by a severe and sweeping implication, that the laity were excluded from the use of the Bible; for even the clergy, under whose management the interests of the Church might have been considered as safe, were not permitted to read it to them in a language which they were able to understand. Latin, indeed, the people might have occasionally, if they liked the sound of it; (and it is said to have a peculiar majesty in the sound,) but not one syllable of the Scriptures in their native

* Limborch's Hist. of the Inquisition, chap. xxiv.

† "Mediam *inter has, Latinam* beati Hieronymi *translationem, velut* inter synagogam, et ecclesiam orientalem, posuimus: tanquam duos hinc et inde latrones, medium autem Iesum, hoc est Romanam sive Latinam ecclesiam, collocantes," originally noticed by Wetstein, and quoted by Michaelis, vol. ii part 1. ch. xii. § 1. (Marsh's Michael.) Vide etiam Ernesti Institut. Interpret. N. T. p. 181.

* Gregory's Church Hist. vol. ii. p. 345.

† "If the Council (of Constance, A. D. 1414,) should tell you," said one of the Doctors to Huss, "that you have but one eye, though you have really two, you would be obliged to agree with the Council." "While God keeps me in my senses," replied Huss, "I would not say such a thing against my conscience, on the entreaty or command of the whole world." Milner's Church Hist. vol. iv. p. 244.

‡ The original words of the decree are these:—"Insuper eadem sacrosancta Synodus, considerans, non parum utilitatis accedere posse Ecclesiæ Dei, si ex omnibus Latinis editionibus, quæ circumferuntur, sacrorum librorum, quænam pro authentică habenda sit, innotescat; statuit et declarat, ut hæc ipsa vetus et vulgata editio, quæ longo tot seculorum usu, in ipsa Ecclesia, probata est, *in publicis lectionibus, disputationibus et expositionibus, pro authentică habeatur;* et UT NEMO ILLAM REJICERE, QUOVIS PRÆTEXTU, AUDEAT VEL PRESUMAT." Vide Sacrosanct. et Œcumenic. Concil. Tridentini, Canones et Decreta. Sess. iv.

tongue. They were to take the doctrine of salvation implicitly from the hand of the priest; and, of course, just as much or as little of it, as it suited his purpose to give · and they were to receive it too, with whatever aspect or colouring, he thought proper to propose it.* Indeed, if they received it at all, it was not in their power to do any thing else. They had not the means of inquiring, and of judging for themselves. The Church to which they belonged, had cruelly deprived them of those means. One of its most celebrated councils, in one of its most solemn decrees, a decree, which was ratified by the Pope, and which is still binding upon the papal communities, had ordained that they should not have them.

Thus the key of knowledge was left in the possession of an interested, corrupt, and tyrannical priesthood; and the right of private judgment was for ever taken away. I have often wondered with what colour of decency, I had almost said, with what forehead of presumptuous and guilty composure, a Roman Catholic clergyman could preach from such a text as this. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." John v. 39.†

But what are the people to do? You cannot deprive them of their rational nature; their understandings will be at work one way or another. Some opinions, or something in the place of opinions, they must have. What do you propose for them, therefore, since you will not give them the Bible?

In answer to these questions, I might quote to you two other decrees promulgated by the Council of Trent—one of them concerning the interpretation of Scripture, and the other concerning the value of the traditions; but your time will not permit me to introduce them at present. I beg, however, it may be understood, that when I decline to quote these two other decrees, I do so, merely because I would not encroach upon your patience. I have no wish to elude the question. You must not fancy that I cannot bring them forward. The decrees are upon the record, and any man may consult them if he chooses.*

I observe in general, that, in order to meet the difficulty above alluded to, the papists have invented their doctrine of implicit faith. According to this doctrine, the people are in no sort or degree the judges of theological truth. It is not necessary for them to inquire into the meaning of Scripture, and therefore it is not necessary for them to read it. They need scarcely have any opinion at all. They are only to hold by this simple proposition. "I believe whatever the Church believes." It is even unnecessary to inquire *what* it is that the Church believes; whether a large creed or a small one; with many articles or with few; whether she argues her case, or whether she merely propounds the faith whether her interpretations are really the interpretations of the fathers or not; or whether her traditions have actually been handed down: no investigation, no judgment, is requisite or allowed; all that is necessary is, that by one great gulp of *intellectual deglutition*, the people shall swallow this single proposi-

* "Cum non abhorreant, quando sententiæ quædam Scripturæ, docendo, transferantur in vulgares linguas; hoc tamen damnant, si *tota* scriptura, versione scripta, ita transferatur. Quare autem hoc? nisi quod volunt hanc sibi licentiam reservare, ut *quicquid libet*, et *quantum libet*, *populo proponant:* cui incumbat necessitas credendi, *sine ulla dijudicatione*. Vident autem hanc licentiam non fore integram, si populus ipse Scripturam, in lingua vulgari, et notâ, legere possit. *Hæc est illa Helena; hinc illæ lachrymæ*. Examen. Concil. Tridentin. per D. D. Martin. Chemnicium, p. 55.

† I have no doubt that there have been many conscientious members of the Church of Rome. The piety of Fenelon and of Pascal is well known; yet Fenelon wrote a treatise, to prove that the Scriptures should not be perused in the vulgar tongue. See a letter in the Bishop of Arras, on reading the Holy Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, by Monseigneur de Salignac de la Mothe Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray, translated into English by the Rev. Mr. Peach, Pastor of St. Chad's Chapel, Birmingham, and published 1816, by W. E. Andrews. To which is subjoined an approbation by the R. R. Dr. John Milner, Bishop of Castabala and Vicar Apostolic of the Midland district; referred to in Blair's Revival of popery, just published.

* *The Decree or Canon concerning the Interpretation of Scripture.*

"Præterea, ad coercenda petulantia ingenia, decernit, ut nemo, suæ prudentiæ innixus, in rebus fidei, et morum ad ædificationem doctrinæ christianæ pertinentium, sacram Scripturam ad suos sensus contorquens, contra eum sensum, *quem tenuit et tenet sancta Mater Ecclesia, cujus est judicare, de vero sensu et interpretatione scripturarum sanctarum;* aut etiam contra unanimem consensum Patrum, ipsam Scripturam sacram interpretari audeat; etiam si hujusmodi interpretationes, nulla unquam in tempore, edendæ forent. Qui contravenerint, per Ordinarios declarentur, et pœnis a jure statutis, puniantur." This decree excludes altogether the right of private judgment.

The Decree or Canon relating to the Traditions is as follows. It fairly and unblushingly sets the traditions of the Church upon a level with the inspired books. "Sacrosancta Tridentina Synodus—perspiciens hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri, in libris scriptis et *sine scripto traditionibus*, quæ ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptæ, aut ab ipsis Apostolis, Spiritu Sancto dictante, quasi per manus traditæ, ad nos usque pervenerunt, orthodoxorum Patrum exempla secuta, OMNES LIBROS tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti (cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor,) NEC NON TRADITIONES IPSAS, tum ad fidem, *tum ad mores* pertinentes, tanquam vel ore tenus a Christo, vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas, et continuâ successione, in Ecclesiâ Catholicâ conservatas, PARI PIETATIS AFFECTU, ET REVERENTIA, SUSCIPIT, ET VENERATUR." This decree forms part of the Decretum de Canonicis Scripturis, and is not generally printed by itself. Vide Concil. Trident. Canones et Decreta, Sess. IV. Vide etiam Chemnicii Examen, p. 69–87.

tion, "I believe whatever the Church believes."*

Thus are the laity of Christendom represented in no other light than as the recipients of matter prepared for them by the Church. How degraded must the state of Europe have been when the doctrine of implicit faith was generally admitted! In the popish books, the people are often compared to sheep, "silly animals," as Lainez, the general of the Jesuits, expressed it, "which have no part or choice whatever in conducting themselves," and surely the melancholy exactness of the similitude is abundantly apparent. Think for a moment of a popish congregation in the sixteenth century. They have no Bibles in their hands; they could not read them if they had them; the prayers which they offer are in an unknown tongue; they may be addressed from the pulpit, it is true, but it is never supposed that they are to *judge* of what they hear; their rational and accountable nature, that which distinguishes them from the very brutes, is kept entirely out of view; they are merely a mass of materials, to be wrought into shape, and used for the purposes of those who have more information, and often less integrity than themselves.

We have read, my friends, in our youth, of patriot men, the avengers of a country's wrongs; and after witnessing, in severe experience, the meanness and the selfishness of mankind, we turn again to the page of history, with eagerness increased a thousand fold; and we trace, with a thrilling emotion the sacred steps of Leonidas, of Wallace, or the archer Tell; and a nation's gratitude bids the monument arise to perpetuate the memory of their deeds; of fetters broken and for ever cast away, of tyranny overthrown, of justice recalled from the heavens, and fixing her abode once more upon the earth. And shall no eye turn with eagerness to the page which tells us of the *mind* emancipated; shall no heart throb with emotion, shall no breath breathe irregular, as we read of those who burst the bands of spiritual slavery; who restored the reason to its freedom; and taught the man, intellectual and at large, judging for himself, and aware of the responsibility, to claim the place which belongs to him among the works of his Creator? I would bind the laurel on the patriot's brow; I would join with you, my countrymen, (if such your purpose be) in adding a stone to the heap which covers his remains; but while the fame of Wallace is to be preserved by an additional security, *foul scorn do I hold it* to be under the necessity of reminding you, that no column has been raised to the memory of Knox, and that no church or public edifice, throughout the land which he delivered, has been inscribed with his name.*

But it may be said, whatever the papists may have done in the middle ages, or in times previous to the Reformation, they do not, at present, withhold the Bible from the people. There are certainly such things as popish versions of the Scriptures into the vulgar tongues.

To this objection I answer, that, when placed in peculiar circumstances, the papists *have*, in more instances than one, translated the Scriptures into the common languages: but they have done so, *merely because* they were placed in peculiar circumstances. In general, it may be affirmed, that the Protestants have shamed them into the measure. They have not adopted it, of their own motion or preference, either willingly or freely.

I readily admit, that there are such things as popish versions of the Scripture into the vulgar tongues. There is, for instance, the Rhemish New Testament, which was published in the year 1582; and there is the Douay Old Testament, which came forth in 1670. But the authors of the Rhemish version are not ashamed to confess, that they were compelled, by the circumstances in which they were placed, to translate the New Testament into English.† They even judge it necessary to set down this confession in their own preface. In other circum-

* See Campbell's Lect. on Ecclesiastical History, Vol. II. p. 255. "Et quidem ita, ut non opus sit, vel cogitare, vel inquirere, vel intelligere, quæ, aut qualia, sint illa, an, et ubi, in verbo Dei habeant fundamenta." Chemnic. Examen. C. T. p. 60.

* This sermon was preached soon after a meeting had been held in Glasgow, with a view to erect a monument to the memory of Wallace; Henry Monteith, Esq. of Carstairs, Lord Provost of the city, in the chair.

† "Which translation we do not, for all that, publish *upon erroneous opinion of necessitie*, that the Holy Scriptures should always be in our mother-tongue, or that they ought or were ordained of God to be read indifferently of all, or could be easily understood of every one that readeth or heareth them in a *known language*; or that they were not often, through man's malice or infirmitie, much hurtfull to many: or that we generally and absolutely deemed it more convenient in itself, and more agreeable to God's word, and honour and edification of the faithfull, to have them turned into vulgar tongues, than to be kept and studied only in the ecclesiastical and learned languages: NOT FOR THESE, NOR ANY SUCH LIKE CAUSES, doe we translate this sacred booke, but upon speciall consideration of the present *time, state and condition of our country*, unto which divers things are either necessarie or profitable, or medicinable now, that otherwise, in the peace of the church, were neither much *requisite*, nor perchance *wholly tolerable*." Preface to the Rhemish N. T. p. 1. The reader will do well to consult this preface. The Rhemish translators *felt* that they were doing a thing which was contrary to the principles of their church.

stances, they tell us, the thing "were neither much requisite, nor perchance wholly tolerable."

The unprincipled policy of the Church of Rome allows her members to temporize. That church knows perfectly well *when* to remain quiescent, and when to urge her claims, and to push them resolutely to the issue. But though she stoops and lies close, and waits for her opportunity, and even makes it convenient to wait a long while, she never fails to improve it when it occurs. A period of much ignorance is one of her chosen occasions, and a very weak reign is another. The Spaniard is her prey at present. That king appears to have had certain doubts, of a troublesome nature, and also certain fears, lest his Castilians should become irreligious, in consequence of their intercourse with the English. The "holy mother church" contrived to hear (by accident, as it were,) of those difficulties and unpleasant forebodings; and she forthwith re-established the Inquisition in the Spanish dominions, to the infinite abatement of the royal apprehensions. She never relinquishes any principle which she has once entertained. She is an infallible church, and *cannot* do it. She may make some show of giving the Scriptures to the people (just as she may talk about liberality and toleration) when the world would cry out against her if she did not; but let the case be changed, and she will certainly withdraw them. The papist dislikes the Bible, because popery and the Bible are at variance. He permits the common use of the sacred writings, only when he cannot help it. I never heard of a Roman Catholic preacher who enjoined or exhorted his hearers to read the Scriptures.

The truth is, that the papists have uniformly put the Bible into the hands of the laity with very great reluctance. This was altogether the case in former times, and it is very much the case in the present day.

The version must be approved of by the Church. The Pope himself, or the Cardinals, must examine it. If it comes forth at all, it usually comes in a very expensive shape, so that the people cannot buy the book. It is surrounded too with such a flood of annotations, that the text, in some of the popish versions, has been compared to Noah's ark in the midst of the waters. These annotations, while they go near to swallow up the sacred Scriptures, increase the price of the copies in a very great degree. And let it be for ever observed, that, in the estimation of Roman Catholics, the note or comment upon the text is of equal value with the text itself; for the Council of Trent has most solemnly decreed, that as the Church alone has the right of interpretation, so the sense of the Church is the only true sense of Scripture.*

Even when the book is approved of, and published, it is not given freely to the world. The man who reads it must have the permission of the Church. However strange it may sound in Protestant ears, however much it may rouse the feelings of indignant protestantism, he must have a *license in writing* from the bishop or inquisitor, from his parish priest or confessor, before he can look into his Bible. The ecclesiastical authorities must judge of each case as it occurs, and give the Scriptures only to those who are likely to make a *proper* use of them. And by the fourth rule of the Council of Trent, if any unlicensed person shall presume to read the Bible in the vulgar tongue, or to keep it in his possession, whether he reads it or not, he shall on no account receive *absolution;* and farther, by the same rule, if any bookseller shall sell a copy, even of a Catholic version, to an unlicensed person, or concede to him the use of it in any other way, he shall forfeit the price of the copy, and be otherwise punished, *according to the discretion* of the spiritual judge.†

Let me now corroborate these statements, and strengthen, at the same time, the whole of the argument under this second head, by a short historical detail.

In the year of our Lord 1408, Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, decreed, in a convocation held at Oxford, "that no unauthorized person should translate any text of Scripture into English or any other language, by way of book or treatise; and that no translation made, either in, or since, Wickliffe's time, should be read, till approved by the bishop of the diocese, or a provincial council.‡ In consequence of this decree, several persons were put to death, (burned) for having read the New Testament and the Ten Commandments in Wickliffe's translation.§

In the reign of king Henry V., A.D. 1414, a law was made, by which all Lollards, or those who possessed or read any of Wickliffe's books, were declared to be guilty of treason, and their goods were or-

* Vide Chemnicii Examen. Concil. Trident. p. 59.

† Vide "De Libris Prohibitis, Regul. x." usually annexed to the Canones et Decreta, Conc. Trid. The 4th Rule gives a full prohibitory power to the clergy; and can any man dream that they will not exercise it?

‡ See Lewis's History of the Translations of the Bible and Testament, p. 40.

§ Lewis's Hist. of Translat. p. 15. See also Preface to the Rhemish N. T. parag. 4

dained to be confiscated." This law was considered as particularly directed against those who read the New Testament in the English of Wickliffe's translation.*

In the year 1429, Nicholas Belward was accused of having in his possession a New Testament, which he had bought in London for 4 merks and 40 pence, or £2 16s. 8d., a sum equivalent to more than forty pounds at present.†

In 1530, Henry Forrest was put to death at St. Andrew's, in our own country, by a sentence of the Episcopal Court; and one of the charges against him was, that he had in his possession a copy of the New Testament in the vulgar tongue.‡

In the year 1538, a whole impression of the English Bible, (Matthewe's) consisting of 2,500 copies, was seized at Paris by the orders of the Inquisition, (though the King of France had licensed the printer,) and committed to the flames.§

Notwithstanding these measures, however, prohibitions, persecutions, and hostile attempts of irregular and varied malignity, the desire for the Bible in the English language, appears to have increased. It is likewise to be noticed, that, a considerable time before the year 1543, the theology of King Henry VIII. had begun to waver; and it continued to vibrate, as every body knows, according to the purposes or the humours of that capricious monarch, between the papacy on the one hand, and the reformation on the other. In these circumstances, the Bible was *half* given, as it were, to the people. It was prohibited when the popish tendencies of the royal theologian prevailed; and it was allowed, when the king regaled himself, in idea, with the plunder of another monastery, or when the pontiff was refractory about a fresh divorce. It was therefore enacted, A.D. 1543, "that no women, except noblewomen and gentlewomen, *who might read to themselves alone, and not to others;* nor artificers, apprentices, journeymen, serving-men, husbandmen, nor labourers, were to read the Bible or New Testament in English, to themselves or to any others, privately or openly, upon pain of one month's imprisonment." This Act, which related to Tyndal's Bible, comprehended in its operation by far the greater part of the people of England; and in the year 1546, a similar Act was passed, prohibiting Coverdale's Bible as well as Tyndal's.*

I pass over many other laws and artifices to withhold the Bible from the commonalty, and among the rest, an attempt, which perhaps would have answered the purpose extremely well, to retain the prineipal *Latin words* in the English version. This insidious attempt was made by Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and the popish faction, in King Henry the Eighth's time, A.D. 1542.† But I go on to remark, that very lately, (1813,) a proposal was made by a number of Protestants residing in London, to the English Catholic Board, relative to the circulation of the Scriptures. The proposal was in substance, as follows: That the Protestants would publish, at their own expense, the popish version of the New Testament, called the Rhemish version, if the Catholic Board, in conjunction with the clergy of the Romish Church, would circulate the copies, *without note or comment*, or disperse them among the people in that state, either gratuitously, or at a small price. The proposal, however, was rejected. The Roman Catholic clergy, as they themselves unblushingly declared, "would never put the English Scriptures into the hands of the poor and ignorant." They would not allow them to be printed and circulated without the Rhemish notes, which breathe such a spirit of exclusive intolerance, and of bloodthirsty persecution against the Protestants; and they would not disperse them gratuitously, either with such notes, or without.‡

And to complete the proof, let me request

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* "In the said parliament (one held at Leicester) the King made this most blasphemous and cruel act to be a law for ever, that whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in their mother tongue (which was then called *Wickleu's* learning) they should forfeit land, cattle, body, life, and goods, from their heirs for ever; and be condemned for heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and most arrant traitors to the land." Townley's Biblical Anecdotes, p. 156.

† Townley's Biblical Anecdotes, p. 157.

‡ "Thair was ane Forres of Linlithgow taikin, who, after lang imprisonment in the said town of St. Androis, was adjudgit to the fire, be the said Bischope, James Beatoun and his doctors; for none uther cryme, but becaus he had a New Testament, in *Inglishche*." Knox, Hist. of Reform. p 19. Fox's Martyrol 865 See also Hume's Hist. of England, Henry VIII. A D. 1511.

§ Newcome's Historical View of Eng. Biblical Translat. p. 41. See also Strype's Life of Cranmer, p 83, and Note xxx.

* Newcome's Historical View of Eng. Biblical Translat. pp. 51, 56, 58.

† The words are enumerated by Fuller, Church Hist book V. p. 237, folio, London, 1655, and by Lewis, Hist. of Translat. of Bible into English, p. 146, Ed. 1818. The following may serve as a sample of them: *Ecclesia, p enitentia, pontifex, Justitia, baptizare, martyr, adorare, simulacrum, confiteor tibi pater, panis propositionis, idolum, pascha, impositio manuum, sanctus, confessio, communio, sacramentum, elementa, contritus, holocausta, ceremonia, mysterium, presbyter, sacrificium, humilitas, satisfactio, peccatum, gratia, hostia, charitas*, &c. Upon the attempt alluded to, even Mr. Hume remarks, "that it was plainly calculated for no other purpose than to retain the people in their ancient ignorance." Hist. of England, Henry VIII., 1542.

‡ See Correspondence on the Formation, &c. of the Roman Catholic Bible Society, London, 1813, and Mr. Blair's Letters to Wilberforce on the Revival of Popery: Appendix, London, Ogle & Co. 1819. See also Letter xvii pp. 109, 110.

your attention to the *Bull* which was issued, about two years ago, by the reigning Pontiff (Pius VII.), against the Bible Society, and its auxiliary institutions; a Bull projected, and prepared, and published, at this time of day, amidst the light and the liberality of the nineteenth century. The mournful document in question is addresed to the Archbishop of Gnezn, Primate of Poland, and bears date, June 29th, 1816. It speaks of the Bible Societies as *dangerous to Christianity*; and it denounces the circulation of the Scriptures in the common languages, by means of those societies, as a *defilement of the faith*. It requires the Archbishop to put down all such societies by every method within his reach; whether by *power*, by *counsel*, or by *authority*. It says, that the Bible printed by heretics, that is, by Protestants, is to be numbered among other *prohibited books*. And it imposes upon the papal church the necessity of adhering to what it calls the salutary decree of the Congregation of the *Index*, (June 13th, 1757,) "that no versions of the Bible in the vulgar tongue be permitted, except such as are approved by the Apostolic See, or published with annotations extracted from the writings of the holy fathers of the Church.*

There is another document of a similar kind, addressed to the Archbishop of Mohiloff, in Russia, and bearing date, September 3d, 1816.†

Surely, therefore, I have made out the case, that the papists have uniformly put the Scriptures into the hands of the people, with great limitation and reluctance; and I hope I have succeeded likewise in infusing into your breasts, or establishing a suspicion, which I believe to be perfectly well grounded, that if the circumstances of Society were to change, or, in other words, if the Church of Rome were ever to regain her ascendency over the public mind, she would withdraw them altogether.*

III. The Reformation from popery has restored to the people the use of the Bible, and placed the means of adequate and correct information within the reach of every man.

It were a waste of argument to prove, that the Reformation from popery has restored the Bible to the people. It is in consequence of the Reformation that you have the Scriptures at this moment in your hands. We yield not in one article of our faith, no, not in one fragment or corner of an article to human authority. The preacher of the Gospel throughout the churches of the Reformation sends his hearers to the Bible for the proof of every syllable that he utters: "What saith the Scripture?" "how readest thou?" are our chief questions; "thus saith the Lord," is our watchword; "to the law and to the testimouy," is our battle-cry.†

It was by the perusal of the Scriptures that Luther's own mind was first opened to the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus. It was in the free exercise of private judgment that he rejected the interpretations of a church, which called itself infallible.

It was in St. Paul's epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians that this extraordinary man found for himself the great doctrine of justification by faith; a doctrine directly and broadly opposed to the popish tenet of meritorious works; a doctrine exclusively Protestant; and with the acknowledgment or rejection of which, as Luther himself expresses it, the Church of Christ shall ever stand or fall. It was in the prophecies of the New Testament that he traced the features of "the Man of Sin." It was the humble and painful study of the second epistle to the Thessalonians which impressed it upon his conviction, that the papacy itself, in the intolerant presumption of its ill-founded claims, and in its guilty exercise, was none other than that antichristian power which was to lift itself up on high, in the latter days, and to usurp the throne of God and of the Lamb. He read, and prayed, and discerned, and believed. And he zealously recommended to others what he prac-

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* The Council of Tholouse, which was held A. D. 1229, prohibited the laity from reading the Scriptures, *even in Latin*, unless, *perhaps*, the Psalter, or Breviary, or the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, if any devout person wished to have the use of a copy. But they were on no account to have either the Psalter, or Breviary, or the Hours, *in the vulgar tongue*. The following are the words of the Decree:—

"Capitula XIV. *Ne Laici habeant libros Scripturæ, præter Psalterium et Divinum Officium; et eos libros ne habeant in vulgari lingua.*

"Prohibemus etiam, ne libros Veteris Testamenti aut Novi, Laici permittantur habere; nisi *forte* Psalterium, vel Brevarium pro divinis officiis, aut Horas Beatæ Mariæ, aliquis ex devotione habere velit. Sed ne præmissos libros *in vulgari translatos*, ARCTISSIME INHIBEMUS." Vid. p. 430, Tom XI. Part I. Sacrosanc. Concil ad Regiam Edit. &c. Phil. Labbœi et Gabr. Cossart: Lut. Par. 1671.—Concilium Tolosanum, Anno 1229. De inquirendis Hæreticis.

After this, what shall we say of the Rev. Mr. Gandolphy's Assertion, "that the Catholic Church has *never* absolutely prohibited the reading of the Scriptures." Sermon annexed to the first letter to Dr. Marsh, p. 68.

† See the whole of this subject treated with much plain and powerful reasoning by Mr M'Gavin, in the Protestant, Nos. XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV.

* I am aware that the Bible is used as a class book in the Glasgow Hibernian schools.

† Had it not been for the Reformation, the Vulgate would, in time, have taken place, even of the sacred originals themselves. "The early Reformers, especially Luther and Melancthon, thought it one of the most important advantages obtained by the Reformation, that the learned were no longer forced to walk in the trammels of an authorized version, but were at liberty to open the originals." Marsh's Lectures, p. iii. 10.

tised himself. In the year 1522, he published his translation of the New Testament into the German language. He gave it into the hands of the people; and by means of the art of printing, which, under the singular providence of God, had been invented nearly a hundred years before, he multiplied his copies, and dispersed them throughout the land. The eyes of the people were gradually opened; the world awoke from its deep sleep; and the poor, and the ignorant, and the miserable, and the helpless, received with silent joy the heavenly benefit, and pressed forward in the way to everlasting life. The human intellect was stirred, and men began to judge for themselves. Having now in their hands the standard of faith and the rule of righteous conduct, they applied them to the existing errors and abuses. They perceived and grasped the eternal truth, and separated it, in triumph, from the falsehood. The voice of the preachers quickened, and supported every effort on the part of the people. The chosen text now was "all things are ready, come ye to the marriage." And if any were listless or kept aloof, being still under the influence of that power, which had lorded it so long in fatal mastery, over the prostrate world, the heaven-taught missionaries, went out to the "highways and the hedges," and with the energy of apostolical persuasion "compelled them to come in."

In our own country, the dissemination of the Scriptures kept pace with the progress of inquiry. Our great Reformer, Knox, had his Bible continually in his hand. His invariable practice was, to draw the living water out of the *wells of salvation*. Wherever he went, as a preacher of the Gospel, his two demands were, "the word of God," and the "free use of his tongue."

So late as the year 1542, the people of Scotland were first allowed to read the Scriptures, in the spoken language of their country. In that year, a bill was introduced into Parliament, by means of which this boon was secured to our fathers; but it was not obtained for them without much opposition on the part of the Papists, and a bold and keen struggle by the friends of the Reformation. At length it was "found reasonable," and decreed by the Estates, that "our Sovereign Lady's lieges should have the Holy Writ, *viz.*, the New Testament and the Old, in the vulgar tongue, in English or Scotch," and that they should henceforth "incur no crime, for having or reading the same."* Of the victory achieved upon this occasion, and the blessed effects of it, our great Reformer speaks in terms of the highest satisfaction. "Then," says he, "might have been seen the Bible lying upon almost every gentleman's table: the New Testament was borne about in many mens' hands.* Formerly the people had read the Scriptures by stealth at the dead time of night, or in some remote corner of the country, a few of those who were nearest, assembling, and then hastily dispersing themselves; but now the book was openly shown, and carried in triumphant security or in calm satisfaction, from house to house.

In a letter "of instructions to the Protestants of Scotland," which Knox appears to have written to them soon after his arrival in Switzerland, (A. D. 1556,) he describes the Word of God "as the *only* organ and instrument which God useth to strengthen the weak, to comfort the afflicted," and, "finally, to preserve and keep the very life of the soul in all assaults and temptations."† In the same letter he exhorts them to meet together, at least once a-week, in some convenient place, for the purpose of reading the Scriptures, and holding devout and profitable conference upon their heavenly import. And he represents to them the propriety of joining a book or chapter of the Old Testament with one taken out of the New; that "the well-tuned song of the Holy Spirit" may be discerned in "the Fathers" from the very beginning. He exhorts them likewise to the regular practice of family worship, and especially to that part of it which consists in the perusal of God's word. "Within your own houses," says he, "ye are bishops and kings; and your wives, children, and family, are your bishopric or charge; and therefore," he adds, "ye must make them partakers in reading, exhortation, and in making common prayers, which, I would, in every house were used once a-day at least."‡

It is surely unnecessary to enlarge upon

* See the Introduction to Sir Ralph Sadler's Letters and Negotiations, Act. Parl. Scot. pp. 115, 425.

* See his History of the Reformation, book i. p. 34 "This was na small victorie of Jesus Christ, fechting aganis the conjured enemies of his veritie; nor sma.l comfort to sik as befoir were halden in sick bondage, that they durst not have red the Lordis Prayer, the Ten Commandementis, nor the Articles of their fayth, in the *Inglische* toung, bot they sould haif been accusit of heresie."

† "To yow, deir brethrene, I wryt my knawledge and do speik my conscience, that sa necessarie as meit and drink is to the preservatioun of lyfe corporall, and sa necessarie as the heit and brychtnes of the sunne is to the quickening of the herbis, and to expel darknes; sa necessarie, is also to lyfe everlasting, and to the illuminatioun and lycht of the saule, the perpetuall meditatioun, exercis, and use, of Godis halie word." Letter of Instruct. to the Protest. of Scotland, M'Crie's Life of Knox, vol. i. p. 112. See also 1 Cor. xiv. 7; 1 Thess. v. 21; 1 John iv. 1.

‡ Ibid.

this part of my subject. Let me, however, just show you, in a sentence or two, by what sort of arguments the Protestants have maintained the propriety and the necessity of translating the Scriptures into the spoken language of every country.

One of their best arguments may be stated in the following words:—

We give the Bible in English to our people, for the same reason that the Bible was given in Latin to the people of Italy. Latin is not the original language in which the sacred Scriptures were written; the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. But because the people of Italy were ignorant of Hebrew and of Greek, the Scriptures, originally written in these languages, were translated into Latin, that the people of Italy might be able to read them, Latin being their mother-tongue. Just so, the Scriptures were translated into German, that the German people might be able to read them, German being their mother-tongue; and into English, that the English people might be able to read them, English being *their* mother-tongue. And for precisely the same reason ought the Scriptures to be translated into the native languages of the Russians, Tartars, or Hindoos, that the Russians, Tartars, or Hindoos, may be able to read them.

It will not be very easy for papal skill or artifice to answer this argument, or to elude its force; or as Knox, had he been alive, would perhaps have expressed it, Satan himself, with the conjured enemies of Christ's verity, shall not be able to gainsay it.

It is upon the principle recognised in the argument alluded to, that the British and Foreign Bible Society is constituted. I need not tell you, that the exclusive object of this truly Protestant institution is to print and to circulate the holy books in the vernacular tongues; and the time would fail me were I to speak to you of its ample means, its unconquerable activity, and its triumphant success.

My brethren, the period in which we have lived has, indeed, been an eventful one. The political world has been shaken, and its conflicting elements have returned to their repose. The light of heavenly truth has stretched far into the thick darkness of paganism; and idolatry, in all the horror of its cruelty and of its pollution, has been constrained to yield before the power of the Gospel. We have seen the things which many prophets and righteous men desired to see, and could not. The distant nations and the remotest islanders have now received the Scriptures. In point of history and fact, the book of life is in their hands. This is no longer a matter of hope, of hope half supported and feeble; it is no longer a thing which holy men think of and pray for, or which men skilful in the prophecies and ardent in exposition make bold to anticipate; it is done; the achievement is in a great degree performed; the bruit of it is quivering in our ears, and the account of it is upon the record. It is a part of the history of the 19th century, that "the heathen" have been given to Christ Jesus "as his inheritance." If the voice say, Cry, *we know what we shall cry*. "The kings and the judges of the earth are become wise," and the "ends of the world" are turning to the Lord. At this very moment the Autocrat of all the Russias stands forth from the company of his princes and mighty men of valour with the Bible in his hand; and his whiskered Cossacks and unseemly Tartars receive from the imperial munificence the unwonted gift.

The great light springeth up and shineth, and it is exceeding glorious. All flesh shall see it together. Hail, heavenly light, radiance ever pure and ever living! no cloud may obstruct thy progress, no shadow of death may prevail against thee!

Every year adds to the resources and to the activity of the institution for publishing the Scriptures. Its auxiliary associations, supported by every good man's endeavour, and every good man's prayer, are multiplying throughout the world. Do we deceive ourselves, or is it really so, that the aspect of the times is waxing millennial? Can it indeed be, that the light which now shines is the dawning of the blissful period?

It is true biography reads to us many a useful lesson; the greatest wits have erred in expounding the prophecies. As an interpreter of the apocalyptical symbols, Napier of Merchieston, the inventor of the logarithms, went out a common man. It has been said of Sir Isaac Newton, that he wrote his observations on the book of Daniel to console, by his failure, the rest of mankind. It were no modesty in us, therefore, to restrain the flight of anticipation. We must wait for the clear commentary and the full assurance of the event. Yet, if the rapid and most extensive diffusion of heavenly knowledge be any certain sign of an approaching millennium, it does appear *to our eyes* as if that period of peace, and holiness, and light, and love, were at

no great distance. Peradventure the Jew will speedily arouse himself. And yet a little while, and *it may be* that the irresistible fact shall compel even the scoffer to listen, as we quote the words uttered of old, by God's servant, in holy apocalypse: "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand: and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Rev. xx. 1.

Let me now conclude this discourse with a short application of the subject.

My brethren, ye have the sacred Scriptures in your hands: and your indignation would very properly arise, if the church to which you belong should ever think of preventing you from reading them. In that case, you would claim the unalienable privilege of Protestants; and, out of mere ill nature perhaps, you would read your Bibles in spite of the Church. But when we urge you not only to claim your privilege, but to use it, and to profit by it; not only to read the Scriptures, but to *search* them daily; to "try the spirits," to "prove all things," and to "hold fast that which is good," how comes it that this duty is so shamefully neglected among you? Even those of you that are great readers, (to use your own phrase,) do not read the Bible. How will you answer for your carelessness in the severe inquisition of the final judgment? The naked Indian will rise up against you and condemn you. It is no doubt proper that you should read other books—books of science, of history, or of polite letters; but you will find in the Bible what you will find in *no other book*, the sure way to happiness, even in this world, and to happiness without mixture or decay in the world which is to come. It is in the Bible alone that you can read of the Saviour and his finished work—of his redeeming mercy, of his propitiatory sacrifice of his powerful intercession, and of his quickening grace. It is the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, that will enable you to answer the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" a question by far the most interesting and momentous ever proposed in the agony of human misery, or ever repeated in vain in the depths of despair.

Let me press upon your consideration the advice which our founder, Knox, gave to the Protestants of Scotland in his time. Let me entreat you, when you read the holy writings, to compare one portion of them with another—the Old Testament with the New, the Prophecies with the Revelations, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles with the sacred Epistles. Let me recommend to you the use of Bibles with marginal references. Consult the parallel passages. See how the kindred author expresses himself. Observe how the thing is stated, or argued, or illustrated in the corresponding chapter. In this way, even the inexpert in Greek and Roman learning may, very certainly, arrive at the true meaning of Scripture;* and if, after all your diligence, any passage should still remain in obscurity, as far as I know that passage will be found obscure *to the learned as well as to you*.

Pray to God daily for the enlightening influence of his Spirit. Remember that holy purposes, dispositions, and habits, which are the results of the Spirit's blessed influence, will help you greatly to a right understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus; for it is written, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me: if any man will *do his will*, he shall *know of the doctrine* whether it be of God." John vii. 16, 17. Amen.

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* "I will not scruple to assert, that the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his English Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner, will not only attain all that practical knowledge which is necessary to his salvation, but, by God's blessing, will become learned in every thing relating to his religion, in such a degree, that he will not be liable to be misled, either by the refined arguments, or by the false assertions of those who ingraft their own opinions upon the oracles of God.' Horseley's Sermons, vol. iv. p. 227.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS RUSSELL, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the REV. ARCHIBALD BENNIE, Edinburgh.

ON THE CAUSE, NATURE, AND CONSEQUENCES, OF DEATH, AND THE GENERAL LESSONS WHICH IT INCULCATES UPON ALL, AS THE UNIVERSAL PROCEDURE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE REGARDING THE HUMAN RACE;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. THOMAS RUSSELL,
Edinburgh.

PREACHED IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH THERE, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, THE 2D DAY OF AUGUST LAST.

"*Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.*"—PSALM xc. 3.

THE Almighty Creator of the universe, who brought all men into existence, never ceases to exercise a controlling power over them, at any period of their history, and manifests the operations of his providence in every incident of their lives. The minutest circumstance, as well as the most important event, which has occurred to them, is equally the offspring of his decree, and the apparent casualties or accidents, which befall them, may all be traced to the workings of his unseen power, and to his appointment. If the sunshine of prosperity gild our path, or the dark cloud of adversity brood over us;—if friends do increase our happiness, or enemies collect for us a store of misery, we can form no other reasonable conclusion, but that this variety of condition proceeds from the providence of God. Whatever may be the afflictions or bereavements in life, with which we may be visited, although human power may seem to have contributed to them, yet we must ultimately ascribe them to the agency of Him, who directs or orders the lot of all men. The same superintendence, which our heavenly father exercises over each of us in every circumstance connected with our mortal life, he retains over that most solemn and interesting event, which awaits all of us sooner or later,—which closes this world upon us for ever, and ushers us into the eternal state. We are not warranted to ascribe such an occurrence to casualty or accident, but are taught by the psalmist to acknowledge in it the unerring hand of Him, who, as he first brought us into this world, again removes us at his sovereign will. "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return, ye children of men."

This decree, which God executes in respect to all men, is a fulfilment of the threatening, which was at first declared, and of the sentence, which was afterwards pronounced against our first parents on account of their disobedience. In this view it must be regarded as a curse or punishment, since "death (Rom. v. 12) passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The penalty of death applied not only to the original transgressors, but also to all their posterity, and is to be considered as the last of the innumerable evils, which befall us in this condition of existence.

The circumstances preceding and accompanying our dissolution, all teach us to regard it as a proof of the wrath of God, and of punishment inflicted upon us, on account of transgression. If it were the divine will merely to remove us from this world to a happier abode, such an object might easily be accomplished without the sad and mournful aspect, which death never fails to present

to the eye of the observer. In the case of Enoch and Elijah, who were translated to heaven, because they were distinguished above others by marks of the divine approbation, there was no pain or suffering, which they were called to endure, but they underwent a change only, which removed from them bodies of sin and death, and invested them with those which are incorruptible and immortal. But the changed and emaciated countenance,—the livid hue, and the ghastly appearance, which the face presents;—the long-continued disease, which wastes the frame, and which often impairs the intellectual faculties;—the convulsions—the agonies and violent struggles, with which many leave this world, tend to show, that we must consider death as an especial sign of the divine displeasure, and, as viewed in itself, affording no ground to hope for a happy reception in a future state. The lamentations of friends,—the tears of surrounding relations, when they observe that the last breath is about to be drawn, and that no efforts of theirs can retain the departing spirit: and their bitterness of soul, when they fix their eyes upon the lifeless corpse, manifest, in a striking manner, that death is regarded by all men with peculiar abhorrence, as the king of terrors, and that it is appointed by God as the wages of unrighteousness, from which alone all suffering proceeds.

These are the general gloomy features of death; but, in different cases, its aspect certainly receives some modification. In the end of the righteous, there is a peace, which is denied to other men, agreeably to the words of the psalmist, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," Psalm xxxvii. 37. The agonizing thoughts, which, when the conscience is not seared, often disturb the minds of the ungodly in the prospect of dissolution, and the tranquillity of those, who have their peace made with God through Christ, when viewed in relation to the general character, which they have maintained, may be considered as evincing the anger or the favour of God. But, in all instances, death must be regarded as a visitation for iniquity; and, when it assumes a milder aspect, this effect must be ascribed to the merits of the Redeemer, by whose atonement it is a vanquished foe, and has been deprived of its sting.

The prevalence of death is universal. There is no rank of life,—no condition of society, which is exempted from its influence. The king, who sits upon the throne, must bow to its dominion,—the mightiest genius must give way to it at the appointed season,—and the most illustrious conqueror, whom victory has often graced, as well as the individuals, who occupy the humblest place among men. No strength of intellectual power,—no extent of literary attainment, can be proof against it; no human prowess can resist its power. The saint, as well as the impenitent sinner;—the righteous, as well as the wicked;—the believer, as well as the unbeliever, must all bid adieu to this scene of things, when the season, which has been decreed by heaven, arrives. The Saviour has not delivered his people from temporal death, but, by his atonement, has plucked out its sting, and has rendered it a passage to an immortal inheritance beyond the grave. The sentence of death impends over all, has been executed in the case of mankind generally since the fall of Adam, with the exception of Enoch and Elijah, who receiving particular marks of God's favour, were translated to heaven, and will continue to be equally enforced upon all, till the last trump, when those, who do not sleep, shall be changed, and when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption." But all, who appear in the world prior to that period, on whom the sentence of death has not passed, are merely under a reprieve, till the decree respecting them be accomplished.

The time, when death is to pass upon any one, is hid from each. Future events are concealed from the eyes of mortals. The general fact, that all men are to die, is known to every one, but no man can declare any thing with the least degree of certainty, or even of probability, regarding the time, manner, or circumstances of his death. These are secrets, over which God has drawn an impenetrable veil, and which he has not designed, that any one should attempt to explore.

But, although the appointed time be unknown to man, it is nevertheless certain in the decrees of heaven. What God has fixed, he will accomplish, and no contingency can interfere to prevent the fulfilment of his desire. There is nothing so sure to all men as death. A cloud of uncertainty hangs over all worldly prospects, and happiness here below. We may possess friends to-day, and be deprived of them to-morrow, discovering to our mortification, that they are as many enemies; we may enjoy the comforts of affluence, and may be called

soon to suffer the evils of poverty;—we may entertain the brightest prospects of felicity, while these may be blasted by some untoward circumstance. We are thus led to acknowledge the instability of all earthly enjoyment and hope. But, at whatever period it may arrive, death will certainly overtake all men at last, as it has been no less unalterably fixed in the divine decrees to be their exit from this world, than their birth was determined to be their entrance into this state of existence.

The causes, by which death is brought to pass, vary in different circumstances. In some instances, there is a slow and gradual decay of the frame, while in others, there is a rapid progress to a fatal termination. The seeds of the disease may seem to us to be sown by accident, or some unfavourable occurrence; but no event could have contributed to them, which was not ordained from on high. Some are removed from this world not by the power of a lingering illness, but, in the midst of health and of strength, while their steps were yet firm, are, from injuries which they happened to receive in vital organs, almost instantaneously separated from the society of their friends. In such cases, indulgence may be given to reflections, or to repining, more than in other instances of disease; but, in these causes of dissolution, no less than in others, which are of slower progress, we are taught to recognise the hand of Him, who knows the end from the beginning, and who has decreed the day of our death, as well as the day of our birth.

It is impossible to escape or to resist this sentence, which, by the decree of God, is to pass upon all men. No period of life can ensure its delay. We are alike subject to it in youth, in manhood, and in old age. The infant, who has scarcely opened his eyes on this world, is called frequently soon to close them; the youth, who has not yet arrived at the vigour or flower of his age is cut off, and the person of mature years is removed often, before he has reached the decline of life. Whatever means we may employ for the preservation of health—whatever plan we may adopt to avert disease or the stroke of death, will prove ineffectual, when the season arrives, which has been allotted to each of us by Him, of whom it is emphatically said, in the words of our text, "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return, ye children of men." The seeds of dissolution are sown in every human constitution, which, by the least exciting cause, produce the intended result.

The words of the Psalmist, which have been selected as the subject of our meditation, at this time, are certainly of the most striking nature, and are calculated to impress every reflecting mind with feelings of the most solemn awe. The thought, that all men are turned to destruction or death at last, not by any casualty or accident, but by the decree of heaven, is fitted to arrest the attention of the most careless; and, when other considerations fail to influence their minds, has often some effect in constraining them to contemplate truths of a religious nature The Christian too, who delights in whatever concerns the glory of God, or the eternal purposes of his will, experiences a secret satisfaction as well as benefit in familiarizing his mind with what has been decreed to be the law of his being, so that he may learn to exercise a calm resignation, and patiently to submit to that event, which is appointed to terminate the earthly career of all living. It will be of importance therefore, in order to perceive the full effect of the declaration of the psalmist, that we consider, in the first place, what the words imply, "Thou turnest man to destruction," and in the second place, the lessons, which are to be derived from this universal procedure of divine Providence, regarding the human race. And may the divine Spirit guide us in all our inquiries, and suitably impress our hearts.

I. In the first place, we are to explain the meaning of the words of the text, or consider the change, which death produces.

There can be no doubt, that the word destruction here employed is synonymous with death. This appears from a reference to the verses following the text: Ps. xc. 3—6. "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth." Then, after this very affecting but apt similitude of the brevity of human life to the duration of the grass of the field, it is added in the 10th verse. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength

they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

When man is turned to destruction or to death, the body becomes a corpse. The animal functions of our nature cease, and the warmth, activity, and beauty, which life diffuses, are exchanged for coldness, inertion, and deformity. The union subsisting between the soul and body is dissolved, and the latter is no longer able to fulfil the desires of the former. Life is extinguished in the body by the removal of the active principle, and what formerly moved with the greatest energy is changed into enert matter, to be the prey of corruption. That form, on which so many gazed with admiration, is now a revolting spectacle; those eyes, which sparkled with intelligence, are now sunk in darkness;—those ears, which pleasing sounds had so often delighted, are now incapable of impression; and that voice, which was wont to utter words of wisdom, and to astonish the listening multitude, is heard no more. The stiffened limbs,—the pale and ghastly countenance,—the deaf ear,—the voice deprived of utterance,—and the eyes of vision,—all proclaim, that the soul, the great inhabitant of the body, has left its frail tenement, and present a picture of the most appalling and terrific nature.

The body, which, after death, inspires the living so much with feelings of terror, is withdrawn from their view, and, although different nations have pursued different methods of accomplishing this purpose, all of every country have agreed with Abraham in the propriety of his desire, to,—"remove their dead out of their sight." The lifeless remains of men become the prey of corruption, and, if immediately after death the body is hideous to behold, it must be so in a greater degree, when the progress of decay has considerably advanced. It is not necessary for us, in order to feel the power of the words of the psalmist, that we enter into any description of the several stages of corruption, through which the human body passes in its progress to decay for this would merely harrow the feelings, and excite sensations of disgust. It is sufficient for us to know, that the lifeless body soon becomes a mass of putrefaction, and is converted into the dust, from which it was originally formed.

But there is a nobler part of the human constitution, which survives the wreck of mortality. The soul suffers not with the body, in the destruction to which it is turned, but finding the latter no longer to be a suitable residence for it,—no longer able to accomplish its purposes, it wings its flight on high. There is not a single faculty of this ever-living agent, which is involved in the general sentence of destruction, for this applies only to the material part. On the contrary, when this active principle is disunited from the body, which clogs it, and impedes its noblest exertions, and, when the prison is destroyed, which formerly confined it, then it receives new power and additional strength, and its faculties, now unencumbered, continue to enlarge to such an extent, that we can assign no limits to their advancement.

The passages of Scripture, which inform us, that death does not destroy the life of the soul, but that it continues to exist in another state of being, are numerous. We are informed of this, when we are told, that "the dust (Eccles. xii. 7,) shall return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it," for we here learn, that the soul and body are two distinct beings, and the one cannot therefore be affected by the fate of the other. When God says in Exodus, (Ex. iii. 6,) "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" and when our Saviour says, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," Matth. xxii. 32, we can form no other conclusion, but that the souls of these patriarchs, must have been in existence at the time of the declaration which God made to Moses. The affirmation concerning the patriarchs that they "were gathered unto their people," is to the same effect, for the meaning is not, that "they slept with their fathers," since the people of Abraham were buried either in Padanaram, or in Ur of the Chaldees, while he was interred in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan—and since Isaac was buried with his parents only, who could not be styled his people; and therefore the understanding must be, that, when these patriarchs were "gathered unto their people," they entered the society of the blessed. To the same purpose, also is the declaration of our Saviour respecting Lazarus, "that he died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom," Luke xvi. 22, for it affords a decided proof, that the patriarch was at this time in possession of the heavenly happiness. The Saviour's reply to the peni-

tent thief on the cross, Luke xxiii. 43, "to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," admits of no other interpretation, than that the soul of him, to whom he spoke, was to exist in a separate state! When we consider also the words of St. Paul, "while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 8; we are evidently taught, that Christians exist in a state of separation from the body, and it is only after the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle, that their true felicity or presence with the Lord commences. It is impossible to conceive, that the same apostle should also declare, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. i. 21. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. i. 23, unless his soul survived the dissolution of the body, and unless he with all Christians was then advanced to a state of enjoyment, infinitely surpassing what any one is here permitted to experience.

In opposition to the consoling declarations of sacred truth, the principles of scepticism lead us to the conclusion, that the soul is of a material nature, as well as the body, and must of course be involved in a similar dissolution. No less a name than that of Dr. Priestly, is associated with the belief, that the soul perishes along with the body, and continues equally with the latter, in a state of inactivity, until the resurrection. Others again of similar views have maintained, that the soul is a spark of the divine essence, to which at death it returns, and in which it is finally absorbed, thus losing altogether its individuality.

It is matter of sincere and humble gratitude, that such tenets as these have no foundation in truth, and are merely the erroneous speculations of misguided men. They leave us cold and comfortless, depriving us of our brightest hopes, and of our real support amid the many sad events, to which we are all subject in this state of mortality. Calm reflection may induce us to wonder, that such a creed should ever have proceeded from men of letters, enlightened in the principles of science, whose minds were enriched by the progress of discovery, were it not for the assurance, that there is no principle so absurd, as not to have been upon some occasion advanced or advocated by certain individuals. With such opinions both Scripture and reason are at variance.

While the souls of all men survive the dissolution of the body, those of the righteous only are made partakers of eternal happiness. The impenitent, when they leave this world, go to a state of unmingled suffering. In their case, destruction is not the fate of the body only, but of the soul also. The life of the soul consists in the enjoyment of the favour of God, and communion with him, its death or destruction in misery created by banishment from his presence, and from the glory of his power. To the unbeliever, death may therefore be called the destruction of the soul, as well as that of the body.

When death destroys the union subsisting between the soul and the body, it also for ever terminates all human devices and schemes. All our preparations for eternity are confined to this state, and do not extend beyond the grave. It is in this world, if ever, that we must obtain the grace of repentance, and be truly interested in the saving merits of a crucified Redeemer. If we are not here enabled by the Spirit of God to manifest a reformation of heart and life,—to renounce any dependence upon our own righteousness,—and to rely implicitly upon the finished work of Him who came into the world for our salvation, we are assured, that we will never afterwards enjoy any opportunity of any gracious influence. On this subject, it is important to listen to the salutary admonition of Scripture. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest," Ec. ix. 10. Our probationary state closes in this world, and the future consists altogether in the retribution, which is allotted to us, according to our unbelief or our faith cherished here, in the efficacy of the obedience and sufferings of our blessed Saviour. He himself says, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work," John ix. 4. In the present life, we sow, in the future, we reap or receive the recompense of reward, not indeed as secured by our own works, but by the merits of the Saviour, in whom we confide.

Another effect of death is, that it concludes all the enjoyments, in which the impenitent so fondly indulge in this world. When, in the parable, the rich man is

represented after death, as earnestly soliciting a drop of water only to mitigate his suffering, the reply given by Abraham, in a glorified state, was, "Son, remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," Luke xvi. 25. The impenitent do not desire any spiritual joy calculated to satisfy the necessities of the immortal soul, while they are in this world, and they receive none in the future! As they are contented while here with the pleasures, which this sublunary scene affords, so they will be prevented from hereafter participating in any benefit of a higher nature.

The same event, which terminates the happiness of the wicked, or the finally impenitent, puts an everlasting period to the sufferings of the righteous. The language of Abraham to the rich man was, "And likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted." Luke xvi. 25. The sorrows of Lazarus had now for ever closed, and joy was henceforth to be his unceasing portion. No more was he in the humble condition of a beggar—no more clothed in rags, but was now made a king and a priest to God, being clothed in the unspotted robe of his Redeemer's righteousness. His long night of darkness had for ever passed away, and was succeeded by the bright morning of everlasting day.

Many are the afflictions, to which the righteous are subjected in this world. The "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings," Heb. xi. 36, sometimes awaits them, sometimes of "bonds and imprisonments." They have, Heb. xi. 37—38, "wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented," and, to escape the violence of the persecution of their enemies, have been compelled to conceal themselves "in deserts, in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." When the more terrific calamities of persecution have not befallen them, the sorrows of poverty, sickness, pain, bereavements, desertion, and many misfortunes incident to our fallen state oppress their minds to such an extent, that they are led individually to say often with the Psalmist of old, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest," Psalm lv. 6.

But the reflection that all these trials and discouragements are confined to this mortal life, and must speedily terminate, proves a great consolation in the season of their endurance. The certainty of the termination of their sufferings must mitigate the sorrows of the righteous, and the prospect of an eternal reward must prove a healing balm to every wound.

That the happiness, upon which the righteous enter, and the misery, which is the portion of the finally impenitent, may be demonstrated to both classes, to have been impartially allotted to each, the soul, immediately after death, returns to God, to give an account of the conduct maintained in this world. The return of the soul to God is an event coeval with the return of the body to the dust. It is, when the soul returns to God, that an exact account is demanded of the use or abuse of christian privileges;—of the improvement or misimprovement of advantages;—of our faith, or our unbelief;—of our rejection, or acceptance, of the offered salvation. Then will all the secrets of the heart be made known to the eye of each individual, as well as to that of his Maker. The mask of hypocrisy, which has so often been successfully worn before men, will then be removed, and character will be disclosed in its true light The motives of action, by which men have been regulated, and the characters, which they have respectively maintained, will then be so fully unveiled to each, that they will acknowledge the justice as well as the completeness of the investigation, and the reasonableness of the consequent award.

II. Having thus considered the meaning of the words of the text, or the change, which death produces, we now proceed in the second place to point out the lessons, which are to be derived from this universal procedure of Divine Providence regarding the human race.

The knowledge, that death is a divine decree, inculcates upon all men the duty of resignation. Did it proceed from casualty or accident, could we acknowledge no higher power in it than that of some of our fellow-creatures, we might with some reason exclaim against the hardness of our fate, or complain of the exercise of oppression towards us. But, when we consider, that such an allotment issues from the hand of Him, who can dispose of all his creatures at his pleasure,—who has appointed death as the wages of unrighteousness, but who has shown no partiality, since he has assigned it to all, because that "all have sinned," we ought to supplicate the aid of his grace, to banish all murmurings,—to overcome the reluctant feelings of our nature, and to enable us with calmness to acquiesce in his will.

Under every circumstance, death is an event, which must at all times fill with sorrow the mind of him, who is at all alive to the ordinary sensibilities of our nature. To behold the aged sire, whose hoary locks had weathered the storms of so many winters, and had witnessed the suns of so many summers set, bid adieu for ever to all earthly things, and, wrenched from the embraces of his weeping family, consign them to the care of Him, in whom the fatherless findeth mercy, is indeed a scene calculated to touch the heart. That infants should, in some cases, no sooner lift their eyes on this world of sorrow, than they are called to close them, while as yet they have had no opportunity of adding to original sin any actual transgression, are indeed mysterious dispensations of Divine Providence. To see the man in the full vigour of life, whose piety was conspicuous,—whose intellectual superiority was undoubted—and whose usefulness in the world was matter of general experience, removed by a sudden stroke of death, leaving all his schemes of benevolence and plans to promote the public interest unexecuted, cannot fail to affect the mind with awe. When the individual, whom we but lately beheld in health and strength, is, by an unfortunate occurrence, of which he had no anticipation, suddenly deprived of life, and hurried from time into eternity, ere perhaps he had an opportunity of supplicating the Divine mercy, or of offering a single petition for an interest in the salvation purchased by our Redeemer, our feelings are deeply affected. That a youth of splendid talents, and the most solid accomplishments, who desired to devote his life to the service of his Creator, and to live to the glory of his Redeemer,—who gave an earnest of promoting the public interest,—who was the comfort of his parents,—and who was expected to be the staff of their old age; should, before he had yet arrived at the flower of his years, be arrested in his earthly career, is a dispensation, which cannot fail to call any sober mind to serious reflection. When the dearest and tenderest ties of life are broken,—when parents are separated from their children, and children from their parents, murmurings are frequently apt to arise in the breasts of the survivors, and the propriety of a submissive spirit is overlooked too often amid the poignancy of the sad emotions, which disturb the soul. In all such cases, the Christian is taught a lesson of submission, and to join with the Psalmist, when he said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." (Ps. xxxix. 9.)

The conviction, that the termination of human life is of divine appointment, ought to induce the mind of the Christian to submit not merely to the event itself, but also to the time in which it occurs. It is natural for men to regard death in the most gloomy view, and to shrink from the idea of its approach with secret horror. To such an extent has this terror possessed the mind in many instances, that some, through fear of death, have been all their life subject to bondage. But the misfortunes and calamities incidental to this vale of tears, have constrained others to hail it as a deliverance. The Christian even, when experiencing the hardship of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit,—when exposed to the contradiction and persecutions of a wicked world, is, in the bitterness of his spirit and heaviness of his soul, led sometimes to the exclamation of a distinguished saint of old. "Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar." (Psalm cxx. 5.) It is declared respecting the bitter in soul, that they "long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures. (Job iii. 21.) But, though the Christian may desire "to be with Christ, which is far better," to be "absent from the body," that he may be "present with the Lord," his resolution ought to be in conformity to that expressed in the language of Job. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come," Job xiv. 14.

The same event, which calls for resignation, also enforces upon us a spirit of humility.

Pride is a passion, which is natural to man, to which he is ever ready to give the most unlimited indulgence, and yet there is no one more unsuitable to his circumstances. By this sin, the apostate angels fell, and also man, who was formed in the image of his Maker. This passion disturbs the peace of society, leads to unkindness, injustice, jealousy, hard-heartedness, and to dissatisfaction with the ways of God, and of man. Whether it is cherished on account of wealth, influence, endowments, or attainments, temporal advantages or spiritual benefits, it is inconsistent with the condition of men, more especially, when contemplated in connexion with their latter end.

He, who leads a life of continual dependence, whose every breath is in the hands of his Creator,—who receives every benefit which he enjoys,—who was originally formed from the dust of the ground,—and who is destined to return to the same, ought certainly to familiarize himself with humility, as a predominant feeling. The thought of such a humiliating end, cannot fail to check the exultation of the conqueror, when he returns from the victory flushed with success,—must diminish the arrogance of him who boasts of the superiority of his acquirements, and must in some measure repress the tendency of the rich man to glory in his wealth. When we consider, that all these distinctions terminate with this mortal life,—that the loftiest schemes of human ambition are all laid prostrate by the icy hand of death; and that, although monuments may be reared to perpetuate the names of the illustrious departed, the ashes of the conqueror,—of the statesman, and the distinguished philosopher, are all alike committed to the common earth; we are most impressively taught, that a spirit of humility ought at no time to be absent from our minds. We are all hastening to that period, when "he, that exalteth himself, shall be abased," and when "he, that humbleth himself, shall be exalted,"—when those only, who renounce all their self-righteousness, and bow humbly at the foot of the cross, that they may receive justification through the merits of their Redeemer, shall be accepted.

The certainty of death, besides impressing us with a sense of humility, ought to lead us all to be earnest in the duty of preparation for such a change. It is indeed an important event to all, since it fixes their future destiny, and launches them either into happiness, or misery, for ever. As this life is the only period assigned for escaping the punishment of the wicked, or attaining the joys of heaven, it becomes us to improve the precious season, and to supplicate grace from on high, that we may "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Abandoning all dependence upon ourselves or our own righteousness, which is "as filthy rags," we ought to come to Christ, so that we "may have life." We ought to consider, that "now is the accepted time,—now is the day of salvation," and that "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ the righteous." When we remember, how short life is, by what a frail tenure we possess it,—that we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth,—that, in this very limited season, our eternal salvation must be secured, it is surely impossible for us to give the least indulgence to a spirit of procrastination. The natural works of God are ever in a progressive state, and all fulfil their fixed destiny. The sun rises at his appointed season, and knows the time of his going down. Those, who have been favoured with a higher place in the scale of being,—whom God has made chief over all his works below, ought not to be characterized by sloth or inactivity about what concerns their eternal peace, but ought to be most earnestly solicitous to embrace that salvation, which has been secured by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and which is offered to every one, "without money, and without price." All the fleeting joys of time, and the possessions of this world, sink into insignificance, when contrasted with the incalculable importance of the joys of eternity. Procrastination in matters of such awful moment, is attended with the greatest danger. We ought to view all worldly concerns in their true nature, as they will appear to all at last, and ought never to allow them to usurp the place, which belongs to higher interests. We cannot count with certainty upon the evening of life, and even, though we could, we cannot then always ensure our repentance. The season of sickness or of a death-bed, is surely very unsuitable for preparation for eternity, when the body is frequently racked by pain,—when the intellectual faculties are often impaired; and even, when they are preserved in a perfectly sound state, are, from the general suffering to which the frame is subjected, totally disqualified for the collection of the thoughts. While health and strength are continued with us,—while the mind is in full vigour, let us therefore be warned to seek an interest in salvation, so that, being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, we may be assured, that "living or dying we shall be the Lord's," that, when the "Son of man cometh as a thief in the night," he may find us those profitable servants, whom he will invite to "enter into the joy of their Lord,"—that the grave may become to our bodies the bed of rest, while our spirits join the assembly of just men made perfect,—that death may prove to us the introduction to eternal glory and immortal felicity;—and

that at the last we may be able to take up the language of the apostle, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 55—57.)

The reflection, that death, which was originally a curse, has been converted into a blessing to the believer, and has been rendered a passage to immortality, ought to inspire our breasts with feelings of the warmest gratitude to Him, through whose instrumentality, this happy change has been effected. When we consider the intrinsic value of the benefit and the great cost, at which it was purchased, even by the sufferings and death of the Redeemer; it is impossible for us to estimate what ought to be the intensity of our feelings of the deepest obligation. The Saviour has not indeed delivered his followers from temporal death, "for he himself tasted death for every man," but he has deprived it of all its destructive influence, and has rendered it an introduction into his own presence. In order to kindle in the liveliest manner grateful feelings in our hearts, let us remember the price, by which he purchased such a boon;—let us consider the contradiction of sinners, which, on our account, he underwent;—let us call to mind his agony and bloody sweat in the garden, —the hidings of his Father's countenance, which he endured for a season for our sakes,—his crucifixion,—death,—and burial. Let us consider what he has achieved, —let us remember, that by his glorious resurrection, he became the "first fruits of them that slept," and has enabled all his believing followers to cherish the certain hope of a similar deliverance from the grave; that he has assured them, that "concerning them which are asleep," they need "sorrow not even as others which have no hope; for if" they "believe, that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him," and that he is (St. John xi. 25) "the resurrection and the life," that "he that believeth in" him, "though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in" him, "shall never die." Besides the assurance given to all his followers of a glorious immortality, by his own resurrection, he has, by his ascension into heaven at the Father's right hand, gone to prepare numerous mansions, and, by his continual intercession, he sends supplies of grace and comfort, which cheer the hearts of believers in their most trying circumstances, and diffuse a peace over their departing moments. He is truly said to have "brought life and immortality to light by the gospel," for what the speculations of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, did but imperfectly explore, and what Moses in his preparatory dispensation but dimly shadowed forth, He has fully revealed.

Let me now ask you, my friends, what effect the prospect of death has upon your minds? Do you view it with indifference, as the common destiny of men, or do you seldom or ever think of it, at all? Is the certainty of it so disagreeable to your minds to dwell upon, that, whenever it intrudes upon you, you are anxious to banish it from your thoughts, as a subject too gloomy to contemplate? Do you view it as an event far distant, which in all probability will be long deferred in your case, and about which at present therefore, any anxiety is unnecessary? If such be your dispositions and feelings, you are as yet destitute of that state of mind, which is absolutely essential as a preparation for that event, appointed to terminate the earthly course of all living.

But, if, on the contrary, you familiarize your minds with death as a certain event to all;—if, while you do not allow it to spread a gloom over your thoughts, you earnestly desire to live in readiness for its approach; —if you devoutly supplicate an interest in that ever blessed Redeemer, through whose merits alone it is a vanquished foe, then be assured, that yours is a happy condition,— that you behold in the last enemy a messenger of peace. You need not be afraid at whatever season it should approach you, whether in youth, manhood, or old age. Whatever happiness or advantages you may enjoy in this life, from health, prosperity, affluence, or friends, you may be assured, that in such a case, at whatever period it may arrive, the change, which you will finally be called to make, will be one of gain.

It is of the utmost importance, that all of us should be found at last in such a condition. If we are enabled by the grace of God, even by the influence of his spirit, to have our loins girded about and our lights burning, then we are always ready. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

GIVE GOD THY HEART, AND HE WILL REWARD THE WITH HEAVEN;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF EASE, CANON STREET, GLASGOW, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE OLD MAN'S FRIEND SOCIETY,

By the Rev. ARCHIBALD BENNIE,
Edinburgh.

"*Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.*"—MARK x. 22.

It is one of the most common errors into which men are liable to fall, to substitute a part of religion for the whole; and to imagine, because they refrain from gross vices, and are regular in the performance of some duties, that they may safely indulge in the confidence of security, and calculate on the certainty of salvation. We find that men are universally disposed to take the most favourable views of their character and conduct; they dwell with secret complacency on every pleasing trait in the one, and every decent action in the other; and without presuming to suppose that they are absolutely perfect, or completely pure, they readily flatter themselves they are as religious and holy as the circumstances of their condition, the peculiarities of their temper, and the frailty of their nature, will permit. Religion, instead of being contemplated in its utmost purity, and strictly applied as the rule of conduct, is confined within such limits as to be accommodated to the actual state of the character; no doctrine is openly denied, and no precept is literally condemned; but the mind dwells on those truths only which flatter its self-love, or at least suggest no painful and humbling thoughts; and confines its morality to those precepts, which, though it does not fully exemplify, it is accustomed to respect, and professes to obey.

It is curious to observe the subtlety of those devices which the mind employs to justify its errors, and to palliate its sins. It often seems to decide on actions and schemes, as if it were ignorant of the fundamental principles and the obvious precepts of religion. Were it to deny the former, and to reject the latter, we could easily account for its conclusions, and explain its views, but religion is acknowledged in general terms to be true, and there is no attempt made to misinterpret its language, or to abridge its articles. The mind is almost insensibly blinded to its peculiar defects; its attention is never fixed on subjects that tend to awaken a consciousness of guilt, or to inspire apprehensions of danger. Religion, whose grandeur can only be conceived when it is contemplated as a whole, is so mutilated as neither to elevate the soul nor to touch the heart; and the sinner, led captive by the delusions of vanity, imagines he is secure, because he shuns self-examination, and supposes that he follows the road to heaven, because his eyes are closed on the terrors of hell.

There can scarcely be a more dangerous error than this; or one that is more incompatible with the design, and hostile to the influence of religion. The Christian religion requires the entire submission of the will, and proposes to regulate every action of the life. It does not merely aim at improving the surface of the character, and checking external improprieties and flagrant vice: its influence extends to the principles of action, and the sources of feeling; and it is designed to establish a supremacy over the heart and affections, which must be perpetual and unlimited. It must reign without a rival, or it will become utterly powerless and dead; and, though it be true, that in the present state the character of man can never be completely formed, nor the heart entirely purified, yet, unless the ascendency of religion be supreme, its influence will only be partially felt, whilst its delightful consolations will never be enjoyed, nor its animating prospects be confidently cherished. We cannot be religious to a certain extent, and reserve, as it were, a province of the heart for sin and the world. We may be distinguished by a variety of virtues, and regarded by others as examples of integrity, refinement, and wisdom; but, if there be a single class of feelings indulged, a single pleasure habitually enjoyed, taste cherished, or object pursued, which religion condemns, and explicitly forbids, we frustrate its design, and are destitute of its spirit. Religion is designed to supersede every other principle of action, and is revealed as the source of our motives, and the test of our feelings; the homage, therefore, which it requires, is not partial, but unreserved, sincere, and devoted; the sacrifices which it enjoins are not restricted to particular vices, schemes,

pleasures, and prospects, but include whatever is incompatible, even in the slightest degree, with obedience to its laws and submission to its authority; and the influence which it professes to exert, embraces every element of the character, every department of the conduct, and every moment of life. The heart, the whole heart, is the empire which it claims; to limit its influence is to destroy it; to offend it in one point, is to offend it in all. The Gospel, indeed, admits of defects which are inseparable from our fallen nature, but cannot tolerate dishonesty; and the rigid observance of its institutions, the most intimate familiarity with its truths, and the most ardent professions of respect for its authority, cannot compensate for the want of that unreserved submission, devoted faith, and universal obedience, without which it must degenerate into an empty form, and become a most perilous delusion.

The text which we have selected as the subject of discourse, may be considered as illustrating and confirming these general views of the design and influence of religion. It was addressed, by our Lord, to a young man who had been scrupulously correct in obeying the precepts of the law: he could appeal, with confidence, to the uniform propriety of his conduct; and to a spectator who merely observed his external deportment, he must have appeared to be exemplary in all the virtues—a model of temperance, piety, and wisdom—animated with the spirit, and entitled to enjoy the consolations of religion. But, under this fair and plausible exterior, sin and the world maintained their ascendency; there were no gross vices—no secret crimes—no glaring improprieties; on the contrary, there was much amiable feeling—apparent sincerity—spiritual ardour—and patient self-denial. But still he supplied a striking example of the subtlety of sin and the dangers of self-deception; and our Lord, by the injunction of the text, at once pointed out the leading defect in his character, and convinced him that, amidst the blaze of his many virtues, there was one other proof of his entire devotedness to God, which religion imperatively required—the sacrifice of that wealth on which his heart was set.

From the circumstances of the case, then, to which the text particularly refers, it is evident this precept implies that religion requires the renunciation of every object that engrosses the mind to the exclusion of God and duty. The objects we pursue cannot be considered as criminal: the sin is in the desire, or passion, that prompts us to pursue them; and this desire, or passion, can only be sinful in as far as it prevents that entire devotedness to God which the Gospel enjoins. Wealth, fame, and rank, may be objects of laudable pursuit. In our present condition, it is impossible that the mind of man can be entirely indifferent to external things; and nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that, in order to be religious, we must seclude ourselves from the world, shut up all communication with the objects of sense, and attempt to fix the mind on invisible scenes and abstract truths. In consequence of our apostasy from God, we do not love him, and cannot obey his laws; a variety of objects engross those affections, which, by the original constitution of our nature, were devoted to God; and, as religion is designed to restore that constitution, which sin has polluted and disordered, to its pristine purity and vigour, it aims at displacing those objects which, as sinners, we love and are anxious to possess, and proposes to maintain God's rightful supremacy over the affections and will. Some of our desires and passions are sinful in their very nature, and others only in their excess; the one class must be extinguished, and the other restrained and regulated; the love of God is incompatible with the existence of the former, and the ascendency of the latter; and, as it alone is the true principle of moral obedience, whatever impairs its ardour and checks its influence must be firmly resisted and carefully shunned. We may love God, and yet be rich; we may love God, and yet be the idols of the world's praise; for it is quite possible that we may be diligent in business, wise in contriving schemes for the accumulation of wealth, and prudent and vigorous in executing these schemes, whilst God is the object of supreme affection and habitual reverence, his will the law by which our conduct is regulated, and his glory the object which we are most anxious to promote. There is no sin in possessing wealth; and, therefore, the rich man may part with his wealth, scatter it to the winds, or distribute it among the poor, and yet be destitute of religion. His wealth may not be the object which he prefers to God; and it is only by sacrificing that object, whatever it may be, that he can obey the precept of the text. Wealth, indeed, is one of the objects that most commonly engross the mind. It is so generally necessary, that men are apt to pursue it with excessive ardour, and to idolize it when acquired; and, in some shape or other, either as an instrument or as an end, it may be said to be the great rival of God in the soul of man. As it is to a certain extent necessary, it is the more dangerous: for men, in acquiring it, are apt to lose

sight of the limits which separate sin from duty; the ardour which they feel in pursuit of it, is insensibly increased; it gradually becomes more important, till it seems to be the great and almost the sole object of desire, and every other object is abandoned and forgotten. Men have often been deluded into the belief that by renouncing wealth they perform a great religious duty; under the influence of this delusion, they have founded hospitals, established schools, and endowed churches; but this is a fatal mistake. We may continue to possess our wealth, provided we do not idolize it; we may labour to increase our treasures, and enlarge our possessions, provided we surrender to God our affections and desires; and it is only when wealth becomes an idol, engrosses the mind, and monopolizes its ardour, that religion demands it as a sacrifice, because then God is defrauded of his righteous claims, the true design of the Gospel is frustrated, and its inestimable blessings are rejected and despised.

The true spirit of this precept then is, that every object that engrosses the affections and desires must be sacrificed to the love of God. The objects which men most eagerly pursue are very different: in the choice of these objects, much depends on external circumstances, natural disposition, and the example of others; but the precept of the text embraces all these objects, without respect to their comparative utility and importance, as idols which usurp the place of God, and awaken a deep and exclusive interest. Among these objects some are more necessary and important than others; wealth, for instance, may be deemed more important than fame; fame more important than pleasure; and some pursuits present more powerful temptations to the commission of crime than others, and afford more ample scope for the display of splendid talent and vast resources. A man may accumulate wealth without fraud or injustice, but he cannot usurp the rank and prerogatives of his rival without perfidy and violence; the path of ambition is often wet with the blood of its victims, whilst that of avarice or fame is unsullied by a single stain; and the pursuit of power may in general be considered as involving more atrocious criminality than the pursuit of riches or of glory. The precept of the text does not justify us in representing pursuits, that differ in the amount of guilt they involve, as equally culpable. Religion in branding all sin as fatal to the peace and comfort of the soul, still discriminates among the various degrees of depravity and error. It condemns all objects that exclusively engage the attention, as interfering with the lawful claims of the Creator; but it does not place on the same level the man who pursues the object of his desire merely at the expense of his own salvation, without violating the rights or disturbing the peace of others, and he who pursues the same or different objects with equal interest and zeal, whilst his hands smoke with blood, and his tongue is black with calumny. Whilst every desire or passion, when indulged to excess, may be justly stigmatized as idolatrous, there are still degrees of excess; one man may be more avaricious, proud, or deceitful than another; but religion, in condemning both as devoting those affections to perishing things which should be yielded to God, does not condemn with equal severity, nor represent both as equally distant from heaven. Whatever object we desire in preference to God, that object must be renounced; whatever may be the degree of excess in which the desire is indulged, that excess must be checked and avoided; God must reign, and sin and the world must be resisted and hated. The precept of the text is not confined to aggravated sins, mean pursuits, and criminal objects; it includes every object of desire, whether brilliant or mean, whether innocent or criminal. Nothing short of a complete sacrifice can fulfil the design of the Gospel. It says to the poor dupe of avarice, Give up your paltry treasures; sacrifice the gold which you have toiled to accumulate; empty the hoards which you have carefully filled; sell the possessions which have cost you so many sleepless nights and laborious days. It says to the proud slave of ambition, Resign the pageants of rank, the symbols of power, and the pomps of triumph; descend from the envied elevation to which, by perfidy, cruelty, and false pretences, you have been raised; forsake the palace you have usurped, and renounce the sceptre you have delighted to sway; lay aside the gorgeous robe, and desert the gay and splendid hall. It says to the gifted votary of fame, Give up the pursuit of the world's applause; no longer acquire knowledge and exert your talents to gratify a sickly and childish vanity; cease to delight in the flattery of your friends, and the caresses of the great; shut your ear to the soothing voice of praise, and renounce the prospect of nobler rank and brighter fame. In short, to the sinner it says, Give God thine heart, the whole undivided heart, with all its passions, affections, and desires; and then he will approve the sacrifice, and reward thee with heaven.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ARCHIBALD BENNIE, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE ROSE, A.B., Edinburgh.

GIVE GOD THY HEART, AND HE WILL REWARD THEE WITH HEAVEN;

A Sermon by the Rev. A. BENNIE.—*Concluded.*

THIS is a sublime view of the spirit and design of religion. It is not enough to submit to some privations, and endure some trials in performing its duties; religion is so authoritative and dogmatic, that it must govern the will. It is not like any other system of opinions: the truths of science are addressed to the understanding, and do not affect our principles of action, or interfere with our ordinary habits; but religion, as it has been expressed, *comes home to the business and bosoms of men;* it is not amenable to the tribunal of reason, and exercises imperial power. There is a majesty in its truths which is peculiarly its own; there is a vastness in its design which overcomes and oppresses the mind; and all its doctrines are enforced by the weightiest sanctions, and the most urgent obligations. Religion, if we may so speak, occupies the highest sphere of thought and feeling; it presides over the intellectual and moral world; all the faculties of the soul, and all the affections of the heart, must do homage to its power; and, wherever its influence is established, no opinion can be entertained, and no feeling indulged, which it does not approve. It is true, no doubt, that it would be monstrously absurd to represent it as our duty to make religion the perpetual theme of conversation; we have temporal things to pursue, and worldly schemes to execute; and to attempt, as some have foolishly done, to obtrude religion on every subject and scene, to dwell continually on its lofty truths, and to chain down the mind to constant spiritual exercises, would be contrary to the precepts of the Gospel, and ultimately an insuperable barrier to its practical influence. But religion must be preferred to every thing else; it relates to our highest interests; we must live by its power, or perish under its curse; it determines the destinies of men, is the only rule of action, and test of moral truth. Of all other kinds of knowledge, it may be said, that, however much they may elevate and enrich the mind, they have little influence on the character and heart: but religion is designed to form the character, and to purify the heart. It draws forth the soul towards heavenly things, and opens up to its view eternity as its native sphere; and, both from its origin as the counsel of God, and its end as the message of salvation, it may well awaken the deepest interest, and inspire the most anxious concern. It is the highest kind of knowledge, because it relates to God, salvation, and heaven: it is the most useful kind of knowledge, because it furnishes a safe rule of conduct, directs

amidst the greatest difficulties, assists in the hour of weakness, dissipates the darkest sorrows, and animates to the noblest actions: it is the most delightful kind of knowledge, because it leads to fountains of the purest enjoyment, furnishes the sweetest consolations, encourages by the most gracious promises, and enriches the soul with the most splendid and triumphant hopes. In short, it includes all that is greatest, wisest, best; and, to crown its excellence, it bestows treasures which never perish, and imparts a satisfaction which never alloys.

The precept of the text requires the avaricious to sacrifice their wealth; but their wealth is to be applied to useful and charitable purposes. The sacrifice is enjoined as an indispensable proof of sincerity; but the wealth, which is a snare to its possessors, because they make it their idol, may alleviate the sufferings and mitigate the poverty of their fellow-creatures, and therefore is not to be thrown away, or, like a paltry bauble, to be trodden in the dust. Religion casts contempt on all sublunary things; still it commands its disciples to make the world's goods subservient to generous uses; it does not mortify one vice to afford scope for another. The wealth which the rich man in the text possessed, was to be distributed among the poor; and nothing can illustrate more strikingly the kind and charitable spirit of the Gospel than the importance which is thus given to the claims of the destitute. Our Lord, in his public discourses, repeatedly urged on his hearers, with great feeling and energy, the duty of alms-giving. He was aware that men are naturally so selfish as to be frequently insensible to the appeals of the wretched; wealth is too highly prized to be freely bestowed on the helpless and infirm; and the pleasures and luxuries which it purchases, are so keenly desired, that the slender pittance which is allotted to the poor, is given with reluctance and regret. Jesus Christ breathed a new spirit of kindness and charity into the hearts of men; himself a model of benevolence the most active and pure, he represented this duty as incumbent on all his followers; and it may be justly said to form the great characteristic feature of the morality of the Gospel. He exhibited all men as linked together into one great family, children of the same parent, and heirs of the same destiny; and he enjoined charity to the poor, not as flowing from the mere impulse of compassionate feeling, but as inseparable from the love to God, which it was the great aim of religion to cherish and promote. He gave it an higher rank among the virtues than it had ever occupied before; men had been accustomed to regard it rather as a failing than as a virtue—as a proof of fine sensibility rather than as an act of imperative duty. Justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude, had been defined and described as the cardinal virtues; the mere rights of men had been protected by the laws of society; but the poor had been left to the precarious bounty of the rich; and those liberal and expansive sentiments which bind in one mighty chain all the individuals of our race, and which the Gospel not only tends to cherish, but positively enjoins, were unfelt, and almost unknown. The selfishness which characterizes our fallen nature, had seared all the fine and tender feelings of the heart; self-gratification had become the great object of pursuit; and, amidst the cares and strife of the world, all the generous and noble sentiments had been blasted and chilled. But our Lord attacked selfishness in all its forms and degrees; he opened anew those springs of sensibility which sin had dried up, and made them flow forth in rich and refreshing streams towards the whole human race; he made the heart, as it were, one wide and generous fountain, from which all kind and compassionate feelings proceeded; and he gave to the claims of the poor the force of a positive and unalienable right. His religion breathes the very spirit of a refined and glowing charity; it forbids every thing selfish, rigid, and mean. Its disciple is commanded to sympathize in the sufferings and sorrows of the wretched, to supply their wants, soothe their pains, and pity their infirmities. His heart is to be open to every appeal, and his hand always ready to relieve; and, overlooking the prejudices of the world, disdaining the petty limits prescribed by rank and party, he is to submit to every privation, scorn every difficulty, and brave every peril, that he may become a liberal benefactor to the poor, and thus prove the sincerity of his love to God, by the force and tenderness of his love to man.

In thus illustrating the benevolent spirit of the Gospel, it is necessary to remark, that the text furnishes no argument for profuse and indiscriminate charity. The money given to the poor has often proved their greatest curse; and we have too frequently seen that institutions formed to

alleviate their sufferings, and supply their wants, have multiplied the very evils they were intended to remove. We are not to suppose, when our Lord uttered the precept in the text, his language implied that the wealth to be distributed by the rich man should be given to every clamorous applicant; that no care should be taken to select proper objects to be relieved, to administer relief suited to the claims of every individual case, and to guard against those abuses which have sometimes thrown discredit on the cause of christian charity, by affording encouragement to indolence and vice. Among those who solicit relief, there are great diversities, both in the nature and the extent of their distress. The sum which is absolutely trifling when bestowed on some classes of the poor, when given to others, is most pernicious extravagance. There is frequently, too, a modesty in real distress, which shrinks from observation; the poor who have known better days, and enjoyed the comforts of affluence, and the pleasures of refined society, are anxious to conceal from the world their poverty and sufferings; and, instead of imploring the relief which thousands would cheerfully afford, they submit, in solitude and silence, to the heaviest toil, and bear, without a murmur, the privations of their lot. Such classes of the poor should be visited in their cheerless abodes; the charitable should consider their claims as peculiarly sacred, and respect the delicacy of feeling, which bids them to suffer in silence and obscurity; and should always be more ready to give, because they are too independent to state their wants, and disdain to beg. The most deserving objects of charity are often unknown; but it is our duty to search them out; and whilst our hearts overflow with kindness to all, to be particularly careful to relieve their distress, and cheer their despondency. It is evident some men think it is enough to give money to the poor, to fulfil the precepts of the Gospel; and as they will not examine into facts, submit to the toil and fatigue of inquiry, they frequently bestow on the worthless and unprincipled sums that might have gladdened the hearts and cheered the dwellings of the truly indigent and obscure. But of such charity it may be justly said, that it frustrates its own object. In the more populous districts of the country, there is a large class who are poor from inclination, and not from necessity—men in whom every principle of independence has been broken down, and every feeling of honest pride destroyed; and who, rather than submit to the hardships of daily labour and the restraints of an humble condition, gain a wretched and precarious subsistence by affected tones of sorrow, and false statements of distress. Money given to such men is literally a bounty on servility and sloth; it is not true charity; it is money taken from the poor, and given to encourage indolence and profligacy. I do not say that in every instance it is possible, with the utmost caution and judgment, to be rigidly correct in ascertaining the claims of the multitudes who solicit relief; but we should always make the attempt to discriminate; we should not give money merely from the impulse of generous feeling; the christian religion sanctions no feeling unaccompanied with active principle. There is a danger that our charity should not only be indiscriminate, but profuse. We may give too much to the poor; we may remove the motives to industry, and awaken the sense of personal dignity; and, instead of being the poor man's friends, we may be his worst enemies—teaching him to fawn, to beg, and to deceive. There is a feeling of independence which every man ought to cherish; and whenever this is awakened or destroyed, the most powerful motives to duty fail to animate and impress. If we wish to make men industrious, we must hold out no encouragement to sloth; we must strengthen, instead of weakening, the obligations of virtue; and be careful to present no temptation to our fellow-creatures, which may unsettle their principles, or blunt their delicacy. In giving of our substance to relieve the indigent, we must never impair, either by the mode or the extent of our charity, that self-respect which always accompanies steady religious principle; if we do not study to foster a love of industry, and a desire of independence, in the poor, we are, in some measure, chargeable with the imprudence and sloth into which they may be betrayed; and may be justly said to rob them of those honourable feelings which, if once lost, can scarcely ever be regained. The splendid sums scattered among the poor have too frequently a corrupting effect; and though we may approve of the generous feelings which have prompted the wealthy to build the stately hospital, and to found the rich endowment, yet we cannot be ignorant of the fact, that, amidst the blessings thus diffused, there is much real dishonesty,

despicable meanness, thoughtless dissipation, and habitual indolence, engendered and matured. I do not put any restraints on the charity of the Gospel. God forbid! Give to the poor; give liberally, but not profusely—cheerfully, but not indiscriminately. There is enough of real poverty to be relieved; the world abounds in scenes of distress; and the richest and kindest benefactor has ample scope to bestow his alms, his sympathy, and his prayers. The poor are always with us; the victims of disease are pining on their restless beds; the children of misfortune are eating their scanty crumbs, and are pierced with cold in their cheerless dwellings; the destitute widow is weeping in solitude and despair, without an eye to pity, or a kind voice to cheer her; the orphan wanders from door to door, homeless and friendless; and the aged and infirm, worn out by the cares and toils of their early years, and bereaved of their children and their friends, are dropping into the grave, unnoticed and unsoothed; and, in short, on every hand, in every street and lane of the populous city, we may find the wretched poor to comfort and relieve. Give to the poor then, let your hearts overflow with kind and compassionate sentiments; wherever there is real poverty, do not express your sympathy merely by words, tears, or sighs, but by actions; regard the sufferer as your brother, and soothe his distress; enter into the feelings of anguish which rend his bosom, and lift up his sickly and drooping head; banish the sad thoughts that prey upon his peace, and dispel the gloom that is settled on his brow; relieve his wants, cheer his spirit with the voice of consolation, and make him feel that you love and respect him; steal an hour from the bustle and gaiety of life, and obey the precept of Jesus Christ: "Give to the poor, and ye shall have treasure in heaven."

In enjoining these arduous and important duties, religion proposes a rich and splendid reward. There is no doubt that the life of the Christian is one of self-denial; and though it be true there is a real consolation imparted by the influence of religion, yet it is not on earth that its reward can be fully enjoyed. In this imperfect state, there are unquestionably difficulties attending the strict performance of religious duty: sacrifices must be made, and trials endured; and in conquering sin, and resisting temptation, there is often a painful sense of weakness, and an appalling apprehension of danger. We are immoderately attached to present objects and scenes; we are reluctant to renounce sinful pleasures and worldly pursuits; we cling to our favourite idols with instinctive fondness, and are strongly disposed to prefer them to spiritual and invisible things; and even when we are engaged in the contemplation of divine truth, and the lofty exercises of faith, we are apt to look back on the vanities we have renounced, and the scenes we have forsaken, with a lingering feeling of regret. On earth, in short, there is much both to do and to suffer; religion is not all comfort, ease, and joy; and bright as are the moments, transporting the pleasures which the saint enjoys in this valley of vision, it is in looking forward to the future, and anticipating its glory, that he is animated by a reward, in comparison with which, every thing earthly and transient is as vanity and dust.

The reward which religion reveals to its disciples is very simply and significantly expressed in the text. In the sacred writings, there is a great variety of images employed to describe the heavenly state; as it is spiritual and invisible, adapted both to the capacities and feelings of glorified spirits, we cannot fully conceive it; and it is only by metaphors and emblems that it can at present be revealed. The figurative language of the text was evidently suggested by the nature of the precept it contains. The individual to whom the text was addressed was commanded to renounce his wealth; and the reward promised to his obedience was a treasure hereafter, infinitely more valuable than all the treasures of the earth. We are accustomed to say of any object on which we set a high value, that it is a treasure. We say of knowledge, that it is a treasure; we say of fame, that it is a treasure; we say of affection, that it is a treasure—a rich, inestimable treasure; and in all these cases, the phrase expresses the importance we attach to the object to which it is applied. In its application to the reward which religion reveals, it is comparatively weak. Nothing that men value on earth can convey any adequate idea of the splendour and value of that reward; for it includes in it all of dignity, enjoyment, and purity, of which our nature is capable—the greatest honour, the most exquisite happiness, and the most exalted virtue. It is a treasure of knowledge; for there all divine truth will be revealed to the soul; doubts, errors, and prejudices, will be dispelled;

light will be let in on all those regions which are now pathless and dark? from the enthroned Deity, a glory will shine forth upon the mind, illuminating it with bright views, scattering every shadow that rested on its thoughts, giving to its mean conceptions amazing amplitude and splendour, enlarging the sphere of thought, and pouring a perpetual radiance around the soul's free and fearless path. It is a treasure of affection; for there all distrust, jealousy, and fear, will be removed; God's generous, unchanging love, will enrich and soothe the glorified spirit; a pure and glowing sympathy will unite soul to soul; the sweetest thoughts, and the most confiding tenderness, will be cherished and enjoyed; no suspicions will ever darken or chill the current of love, as it flows deep and warm from the rich fountains of the soul; and in communion with God, in the society of angels, and amidst the bright company of the redeemed, all the delights of lofty devoted affection will yield perpetual ravishment. It is a treasure of joy; for there every hope will be realized, and every promise fulfilled; care, trouble, and grief, will be for ever gone; all the meanness, sufferings, and bereavements of life, will have passed away; bright scenes will call up the fairest images, and awaken into life the most animating thoughts; and exercises of lofty meditation, and the purest devotion, will fill the soul with transporting ecstasy. It is a treasure of glory; for there the soul will be raised to its native rank, adorned with unfading righteousness, invested with the honour of a mighty triumph, associated with angels, and welcomed by Christ; then the white robes will be put on, the crown and victory's palm; then the song of praise will smile from the innumerable host; all the glory of God, all the glory of angels, and all the glory of the redeemed, will meet in one resplendent blaze, and fill the vast heaven with its inconceivable brightness. Oh, what a treasure! valuable as the soul, lasting as eternity! Riches will decay and perish; the proud palace will crumble into ruins, and its stately chambers be lonely and silent; the charms of beauty will fade, the trophies of ambition moulder into dust; and all the gaiety, pomp, and splendour of life, will vanish like a dream, and leave not a wreck behind. But the treasure of the righteous will endure for ever; it will never diminish, but always increase; it will always satisfy and delight, leaving nothing to be regretted, and bringing nothing to be feared; a treasure bestowed on the meanest, poorest, and most ignorant of men—spotless purity, and consummate bliss.

Having thus illustrated the precept of the text, and the reward by which it is sanctioned, I trust you are now prepared to listen to a short appeal in behalf of that Society for which I have been appointed to plead. As Christians, you are bound to relieve, according to your means, your indigent and helpless fellow-creatures: the wealth you possess, the advantages you enjoy, are not your own: they belong to the poor as well as you, and if they are made subservient to selfish gratification, idle show, and expensive luxury, you may be justly stigmatized as faithless stewards, and ungrateful servants. The poor are your brethren; they are committed to your care; whatever be the nature of their distress, you are commanded to relieve it; and if you allow them to pine in obscurity and neglect, you are destitute of the spirit of Christ, and are none of his. The class of the poor for whom your charity is this evening solicited, have peculiar claims. They are the aged and infirm—men whose hoary hairs, and tottering steps, announce that the journey of life is near its close, and that the interest which it once awakened, is now faded and gone. There is a natural dignity in old age, which we are all disposed to acknowledge; there is a solemn and pathetic interest attached to that last stage in the pilgrimage of man, which even the coldest feel; and it would be difficult to conceive any case in which poverty can be more painfully affecting, than when it is the lot of those, whose vigour, whose hopes, whose vivacity are gone; and who are left alone, as it were, within a few paces of the grave, without friends, without companions, and without children, to drag out a weary existence, embittered by want, regret, and fear. When the young, the active, and the vigorous, are poor, they have hopes to animate and cheer; they may surmount the difficulties that oppress them, and may yet be comfortable and prosperous; but the old have no worldly hopes to gladden their hearts; for though they may survive for a few years, they are now helpless and weak; they cannot mix in the bustle of life, and submit to privation and toil; and too often the close of life is rendered peculiarly bitter, by a sense of desolation, which the loss of children and friends has gradually produced. The infirmities of age are sufficiently painful

and humbling, even when they are not aggravated by the privations of poverty. But when a man has reached his seventieth or his eightieth year, when the vigour of his frame is succeeded by the feebleness of a second childhood, and the palsied hand, the furrowed brow, and the lean and faded countenance, indicate that the work of decay has already begun, and will soon be complete, the bitterness of poverty must be keenly felt. See him in his solitary dwelling, which scarcely protects his feeble frame from the piercing wind; around him there are no means of comfort,—no bread—no raiment; some kind neighbour trims his little fire, and brings a scanty supply of food; his wife, his children, have been long dead, his friends have forgotten him, his companions are in their graves, and his remaining strength cannot carry him to the doors of the rich. He is an outcast on the face of the earth; he has outlived every comfort; and now he pines on his hard bed, till his pulse ceases to beat, and his spirit departs. Look at this infirm and helpless man; he was once industrious, sober, and contented; he was surrounded by sprightly children, and was respected by his neighbours and friends, but old age came on; the family circle was broken up, till he alone was left—a widowed, childless parent; and now he has no means of support, but the slender pittance which the charitable bestow.

Such are the objects which this excellent Institution professes to relieve. There is no class of the poor whose claims are more urgent. It too often happens, in giving money to the poor, that our charitable feelings are chilled by doubts regarding the extent of their necessities, or the uses to which our alms are applied; but the condition of the aged poor is truly pitiable; they are utterly helpless, incapable of those excesses by which some classes of the poor frustrate the liberality of the compassionate and humane, and, in most cases, unable even to solicit the relief which their wants so urgently require. They are poor indeed; without external comfort, at that period o life, when comfort is peculiarly necessary, to soothe the heart amidst the languor of decay and to lighten the gloom of recollections which hang like shadows over the dejected mind. In relieving their wants, there is no danger of encouraging indolence, or tempting to vice. With them, the season of vigorous exertion is gone for ever; the pulse of passion no longer beats high in their bosoms; and wearied with the cares and toils of life, indifferent to its bright dreams, and its animating hopes, they turn from the world, as from a scene whose lustre has faded, and whose gaiety has fled. I trust the appeal now made to your hearts will awaken that sympathy and compassion, which, as men, you feel, and as christians, are bound to cherish. The aged and infirm are at this moment imploring relief; their feeble voices can scarcely articulate the language of complaint, but the broken and faltering accents which drop from their lips, are more eloquent than studied phrases, or elaborate argument. Listen with pity to the tale of their distress; carry the voice of consolation into their lonely dwellings; and in soothing their sorrows, and supplying their wants, let your fervent prayers ascend to heaven, that whilst you bestow the comforts that perish, God may enrich their souls with the blessings that endure for ever.

ON BOLDLY PROFESSING CHRIST IN DOMESTIC LIFE;

A SERMON PREACHED ON 28TH JUNE, 1835, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S DAY,

By the Rev. GEORGE ROSE, A.B.,

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"*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*"—MATT. x. 34.

THIS appears to be a very remarkable declaration from the hallowed lips of that Saviour, at whose birth angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace;" of whom St. Paul writes, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace; for he "came and

preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh;" and whom the prophet Isaiah styles, "The Prince of peace." Yet both are equally true; and so far from being at variance, we shall discover, on a more analytical investigation, that the one completely confirms the other. Our divine Lord is describing a different kind of peace from that alluded to in these quotations. The latter is peace between man and his Maker—the creature and his Creator—the sinner and his no longer offended God, but pardoning and reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. The former means peace between man and his fellow-men—between the believer and the infidel—between the faithful, loving, obedient servants of Christ, and the lovers of this world, with all the wealth, honours, or perishing vanities which it contains. When we dwell on the one of these, it opens up to our view the sublime scheme of our redemption, the amazing love of God, the Father, in devising a plan of infinite wisdom and mercy, whereby the guilt of sin being done away, he could send down on his erring children the blessing of peace. It directs our thoughts to the great expiatory sacrifice for sin, once offered on Calvary, Christ "having made peace by the blood of his cross;" (1 Col. xx.) and it leads us to seek daily for the teaching of the heavenly Comforter, and desire, with every awakened energy of our spiritual nature, that "kingdom of God, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17. But when we meditate on the other, intended by our Saviour in the text, it recalls our thoughts from such an exalted excursive range, to fix them in contemplative study on our own hearts, and the religious feelings and conduct of those immediately around us. It introduces us to the domestic circle, the fireside, and the household duties of the Christian, and thence are we to draw out the rich treasures of his piety and experience, amid the trials, temptations, and difficulties, of his daily avocations; for Jesus Christ subjoins, "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own house."

Such an account of the effect of a knowledge of Christ from the Son of God himself, would seem to render religion a thing to be shunned rather than cherished, and would invest with the aspect of a fearful and melancholy gloom, and even seem to render a mockery that blessed title given to it in holy Scripture, "the Gospel of peace," which is the most precious gift of God to men. The sword of bigotry, fanaticism, and unbounded sectarianism, has indeed divided the fold of Christ into a countless diversity of denominations. A liberal inquiry into the doctrines of revealed truth, on the one hand, breaking through the trammels of ceremonial superstition and idolatry, and a gross abuse of that liberty, leading to error, heresy, and licentiousness, on the other, have produced such a result. But that it should extend farther, and make the Christian's home a scene of revolting persecution, rendered more painfully trying, because inflicted by nearest and dearest relatives, is a thought so disheartening, that it requires the support of the heavenly promise, pronounced by the same divine Being who delivers to us this prediction, "But whoso endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." Yet the history of the martyrologies of the primitive church, of those who cheerfully laid down their lives for the truth of Christ's religion, presents us with many instances in which this prophecy of our Saviour was to the very letter fulfilled. It ought ever to be matter of gratitude and praise with the Christians of the present day, that those fiery trials have not been prolonged to our own times; but that in the figurative sense of the eastern phraseology of one of the prophets of old, who thus described the prosperity of the people of God, (1 Kings iv. 25,) "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon," we are permitted to enjoy all the privileges and comfort of religious toleration. When, however, it even now pleases God to fulfil his own purpose, predicted by his own prophet Jeremiah, (iii. 14,) "Turn, O backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will take you *one* of a *city*, and *two* of a *family*, and I will bring you to Zion; and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding;" and when it is his will that the conversion of the respective individuals of a household shall be *gradual*, much "trouble and persecution ariseth on account

of the Word." The happiest state which can be conceived on earth is where each has a heart thoroughly imbued with the principles of true religion; each delights in the diligent and prayerful study of the Word of God, and from that pure source draws forth copiously all those christian graces which give true dignity to the character, and an amiable sweetness to the disposition; and where the unobtrusive performance of every relative duty as to God, and not to men, marks a daily improving progress in righteousness. Where this takes place, those of a man's own house cease to be his "foes;" they will become united to him by the double, and strongest, and most endearing ties of natural affection, and of pure christian piety and love. All are believers; all converted; all such as the Father seeketh to worship him, because rejoicing in daily adoring the eternal Spirit, in "spirit and in truth." A coincidence of religious opinion, where that opinion is founded on the plain simple declarations of the Word of God, and in conformity with the teaching of divine grace, is the most comforting and strengthening bond that can possibly unite a family; animated by the same spirit of heavenly love; forbearing and forgiving one another; delighting to cultivate the same intellectual pursuits, and in the same instructive and edifying conversation, and abounding in the deeds of similar charity and benevolence. It is an enviably blessed domestic realization of this beautiful effusion of the Psalmist, (exxxiii. 1,) "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Such is the power of evil passions predominant in the heart within, and the delusive enticements and ensnaring pleasures of the world without, that this is a scene of domestic happiness rarely to be met with. Were the Gospel fully embraced and acted up to by every one who professes it, by being baptized into the church of Christ, there is not a family in which such harmony would not reign, and the rarity would then be in an occasional and very melancholy instance in which it was not the case. But only a cursory review of the religious world may convince any one zealously seeking to ascertain the truth, that it sometimes pleases God to open the eyes of parents to the knowledge and earnest prosecution of heavenly things, while their offspring or nearest relatives remain in darkness and error, enslaved to the world; at other times it is equally evident, that while the parents are in an unconverted state, insensible to the value of vital spiritual religion, and only scarce tolerating its external forms, it is the will of the Almighty, according to the operations of his own free and sovereign grace, to enlighten the mind, and open the heart, and guide, in a consistent walk with him, a younger member of a family, whom not unfrequently he makes a blessed instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit for the conversion and final salvation of the rest.

Each of these situations develops a new field of action to the believer, and widens as it were, by the peculiarity of position in which he sees himself to be placed, his sphere of christian duty. The words of Jesus in our text naturally suggest a profitable meditation on these, and a conscientious application of the truths and sentiments to which they give rise to our own heart, and conscience, and condition of domestic life. It is a dreadful state, and one full of the most awful responsibility at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, when a worldly-minded parent, who is altogether absorbed with "the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life," represses the first emotions of religious feeling, and throws the chill of a forbidding repugnance over the ardour of godliness, just appearing in the juvenile seriousness and devotion of his child; when every attempt to act with conscientious obedience to the Gospel is ridiculed as enthusiasm; every endeavour to withdraw from scenes of gaiety and dissipation, that the heart may become wholly given up to God, and the time and talents which he lends us be consecrated to and employed in his service, meets with disdain, or is wilfully misinterpreted into a contempt of parental authority, and where even a regular and edifying attendance on the ordinances of religion, and a desire to benefit by *every means* of grace which God puts within our reach, is looked upon as strict and unnecessary, because too much at variance

with the carnal minds and the irreligious habits of the other members of the family.

Again, is it not an equally melancholy sight, and most painful to the contemplation of every right thinking man, when the parents set daily before the eyes of their children the excellent example of a godly life, and of religious customs and demeanour, and their family, in despite of their pious training, and the excellent tendency of their education, do not take that interest in holy things which, by the solemn vows of their baptismal covenant, they are bound to do. It is true that the promise of God in his holy Word is, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it;" (Prov. xxii. 6,) and ultimately the patient, persevering prayers of a parent for the conversion of a rebellious son have been known years afterwards to have been heard and answered. And even when the greatest care and pains have been taken to guard the moral principles, and cherish christian feelings, and establish religious habits, such is the power of innate corruption—the natural antipathy of the heart to receive good instruction, and the influence of evil example in counteracting its effects, that a godly parent is often called upon to endure that most severe of all trials, seeing one so near and dear to him going on in a course of guilt and profane licentiousness, in despite of every dictate of parental affection, and every mandate of his God. Scenes such as these, with which the world abounds, clearly demonstrate the absolute control and sovereignty of the *grace* of almighty God. If *this* be *first* sought for, then a sanctifying and soul-converting influence from on high will accompany every endeavour to preserve youth in the ways of righteousness; but where this is lost sight of, and the glory of God not sought after, but some less important or selfish end, or the praise of men before that of God, then it cannot be expected that he will prosper even such means with his fullest blessing. Every christian parent should bear in mind the dreadful punishment denounced against Eli, although himself a devout character, and performing with conscientious fidelity his duties as a priest of God, because his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, committed gross and scandalous sins, and he was content merely to remonstrate with them for their impropriety of conduct, but did not vigorously exercise his parental authority in removing them from their station, or compelling them to desist. 1 Sam. iii. 11. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity *which he knoweth;* because his sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not.* And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." From this it would appear, that it is the privilege and bounden duty of a parent, anxious to rescue the soul of his child from the perilous delusions of sin, which would expose him to God's wrath and the misery of eternal death, to use more than remonstrance—to proceed to rebuke, correction, and every legitimate means of authority, with which the Almighty has in that particular relationship endowed him, in order to bring him back to the path of duty—to what is his truest happiness, and to the favour and blessing of his God. Mild, persuasive, affectionate exhortation is first to be tried, but especially with humble confiding dependence upon the grace of God, and the sacred influences of his Spirit; and even any plan or measure beyond this will be tempered with true christian forbearance, and a line of conduct in which parental love will predominate in the attempt to produce all the joy and comfort of filial obedience.

Above all, a *patient waiting for* the result is indispensably requisite under a trial of this nature. Satan often puts into the heart the impious suggestion that, because our expectations are not *soon* fulfilled, or because our *prayers* are *not almost immediately answered*, therefore the means are to be discontinued as useless, and prayer to be restrained before God. But let me exhort you most earnestly and solemnly, my brethren, beware of such a device. If you have been in the habit of plying any one, in these circumstances, with counsel, good books, the reading of the holy Scriptures in family worship, or the adoption of any other means in addition to these, do not throw them aside, because conversion is not at once consequent on

such endeavours. You are under the divine blessing, sowing abundantly the good seed of christian instruction and example; and although the tares may at present appear to be more plenteous, nay, so much so as to choke the good seed, the wheat will hereafter spring up, and you may be spared to see it bring forth an hundred fold; for listen to the promise of the Saviour, (Luke vi. 38,) "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." So long as the love of the world maintains its melancholy sway over the heart, your advice, though delivered with the kindest caution to avoid offence, and breathing forth the tenderest affection, may be disregarded; your example of active benevolence, or cheerful, but solemn consistent piety, be ridiculed as too constraining and precise: your fondness for religion, and desire to glorify God in your family, be looked upon as needless and puritanical zeal; and a very long period may be suffered to roll on, while the mind continues under this fearful delusion of sin. But when God takes the matter into his own hands; when his Holy Spirit removes all the mists of error, darkness, and prejudice; when the grace of Jesus Christ begins to operate in the heart, and a mightier than "the strong man armed" takes possession of the soul; how great and almost miraculous is the change which often takes place on the spiritual state of him whom he thus condescends to make the subject, unworthy though he be, of his redeeming grace. Removed, it may be, by the overruling providence of his almighty Father into a foreign land, far from the comfort and all the delightful associations of his paternal home, the very words which come most impressively upon his memory, and are now dearest in his reflections, are those in which he was once counselled to return to his God, and to take delight in the hallowed duties of religion, the visions of the many and varied incidents of domestic happiness are affectionately recalled to his remembrance; but among these none is fraught with such heartfelt delight as the memory of those hours when, at their morning and evening devotion, his parent assembled his whole household around him, read and expounded to them the Word of God, and commended them, in fervent prayer, daily to the never failing goodness of his almighty protection; and away from those blessed sacred employments, he turns himself to the study of that same sacred volume, from which he knows that the other members of his family, though separated by the distance of half the globe, are making the foundation of all their joy here, and of all their hoped-for felicity hereafter. Separated from parents, relatives, friends, alone in the world, the Holy Spirit puts it into his heart to throw himself entirely and unreservedly upon God. And if this blessed change in his spiritual views and affections takes place, how can he appear before his Maker, save in the felt sense of dependence for happiness, of sorrow, and contrition for past sin, and of eager desire to enter on a holy and christian life, which marked the supplication of the prodigal, when he exclaimed, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." At that moment all the longing expectations of the parent are fully realized; all his earnest prayers of years completely answered. We have the testimony of the Son of God, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over that one sinner that repenteth." His name is written, as it were, in the Lamb's Book of Life, and to his everlasting salvation shall be found recorded there at the last day.

We now proceed to consider that other, and, in some respects, more difficult case, which is very often to be met with in the world, where it pleases Almighty God, in the inscrutable ways of his moral government, and in the unlimited effusions of his grace, to open the eyes of a *son* or of a *daughter* to a spiritual discernment and relish for heavenly things; while the heart of the *parents* remains as yet insensible to the influence of the Gospel, and their minds unenlightened by its truth. This is the situation described by Jesus Christ in the words immediately following the text, and is given us in the parallel passage of St. Luke (xiv. 25) in still stronger language: "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his

cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple;" and after giving two parables, illustrating the necessity of "sitting down first and counting the cost" of a faithful and conscientious embracing of Christianity, he concludes, "So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." *Literally* interpreted, this would be at variance with the 5th commandment; and viewed in connexion with another precept of Christ, would imply, that while we were to "*love* our enemies," we were to *hate* our parents, which obviously cannot be the meaning. It is a most powerful way of exhibiting to us that predominant and supereminent love of the Lord God Almighty, which it is the will of Jesus Christ should reign in the *heart*, and give a tone to the *conversation*, and become visibly observable in the *conduct* of every converted believer in him.

Wherever an earthly parent's commands do not militate against those of our heavenly Father, the Gospel dictates, that they should be willingly and cheerfully obeyed. And the beauty of christian purity of faith, and careful rectitude and consistency of character, are no where more interestingly displayed than in the exact performance of every filial duty, with an affectionate and engaging obedience. Example in this respect has far greater weight than the most judicious counsel or remonstrance; and advice however good, or entreaty however earnest, will assuredly fail of producing a happy result, if perversity of temper, an unamiable disobliging disposition, sullenness, moroseness, needless peculiarity in trifles, or any other *unchristian* feeling, stain the conduct, and neutralize all the blessed consequences which we might be desirous to behold. Let the groundwork be solid, viz., the love of Christ, and a single view to promote his glory, and the love of the best, because eternal interests of those most dear to us, and an eager desire to secure their everlasting happiness and peace, be the sole motives of action, and God's good Spirit will provide that we shall be borne triumphantly through every obstacle and difficulty which Satan will oppose to our success. The *Bible* is the high and exalted *standard*, whence *alone* the believer is to take the tone of his religious feelings, the *model* by which alone he is to frame the outline of his daily conduct; and where is the volume which, both by *example* and positive *commandment*, enjoins more solemnly the maxim that parental authority is not merely to be acknowledged, but *reverenced* with all the duteous homage of filial respect, united to all the holy ardour of a Christian's love? Observe the conduct of Moses, Exod. xviii. 7, "He went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare: and they came into the tent." Also that of Solomon: "Bathsheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand." Remember too, above all, the subjection, the humility, and the dying love towards his only surviving parent of our blessed Redeemer. The Almighty not only promises length of days in the code written on the sacred tables of stone, to those who honour their parents, but again said, (Levit. xix. 3,) "Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God." And in the christian church, by the mouth of St. Paul, "If any widow have children or nephews, let *them* first learn to show piety at home, and to *requite their parents;* for that is good and acceptable before God."

Let these and similar passages be well weighed, and treasured up in the heart, and never forgotten; when, in consequence of the Word of God and our conscience, dictating one line of conduct, and an unconverted parent another, any Christian is placed in that state of painful trial and conflict, where he is bound to remember and act upon these words of his Saviour, "He that loveth father or mother *more than me*, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth *son* or *daughter* more than me, is not worthy of me." Let the mildness of these holy evangelical principles soften every refusal, tincture every remonstrance, and breathe forth in every counsel. Above all, let every persuasive endeavour, or every firm, but respectful denial to compromise the truth, as taught us in the simplicity of Jesus, be accompanied with *habitual, fervent prayer*, for that grace of God which alone can give divine light to the understanding, convert the heart to him, and "guide our feet into the way of peace." And whether it be a fond *parent* who is thus instrumental in the hand of the Spirit for the conversion of a

child, or an enlightened, humble-minded Christian to the conversion of a beloved *parent*, a *husband* to that of a *wife*, or a *brother* to the effecting this saving change in a *sister's* heart, let us remember, that the blessed and most comforting promise of St. James (v. 19) remains the same: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

THE FOUNDATION OF RECONCILIATION IN THE GOSPEL.

A SURE foundation is laid for the overtures of reconciliation and invitations of mercy to mankind.

Here eternal and sovereign *love* erects its throne, and proclaims, from this mercy-seat, the act of boundless grace. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation, through faith, by his blood; to the demonstration of his justice at the present time; so that He is just and yet justifying the man who is of the faith of Jesus. Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation. Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!"

Under this gracious commission, the ministers of the Gospel are authorized to preach repentance and remission of sins, in the name of Jesus, to every nation under heaven. The sacrifice of the Son of God is the chief article of our message, the sun of our system, the central orb to which all the lines of christian truth converge. A convincing proof of this is, that the New Testament designates the ministry of the Gospel by terms expressive only of *this* doctrine; thus intimating that, while we are sedulously to declare the whole counsel of God, our choice and capital theme must be *redemption by the blood of Christ*.—Such terms are, "the preaching of the cross, the preaching of Christ crucified, glorying in his cross, determining to make known nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified." We also would tread in the steps of the inspired teachers; "preaching peace by Jesus Christ: he is Lord of all. We, then, are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be reconciled unto God: for he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

A controversy has been moved, whether we are to regard the sacrifice of the Redeemer as offered generally on the behalf of mankind, or exclusively for those who shall in the event be saved by him. This subject appears to me to involve great difficulties on both sides; and, except treated with especial caution, it is peculiarly liable to become a vain and unprofitable question. If the inquiry be understood to be, Whether Christ died for any, so as to procure the pardon of their sins and freedom from condemnation, but omitting an effectual provision for the sincere and persevering sanctity of their hearts and lives: we answer without hesitation, that, in this sense, he died for none. If the question be, Whether any child of man, who is convinced of his sins, humbled, penitent, and contrite, may entertain a doubt of the efficacy of the atonement for himself, or the gracious readiness of the almighty Saviour to receive him to the enjoyment of all its benefits;—to this I boldly answer, that no such doubt can be entertained without a false and injurious reflection upon the veracity of the divine word. The doctrine of a sovereign, gracious, and personal election, I believe, to be clearly affirmed in the Scriptures, and to be as clearly deducible by rational argument from the divine perfections. But this doctrine is totally misapprehended, if it be conceived to supersede the obligation to faith and obedience, or to limit the generous freeness with which sinners are invited to partake of the *unsearchable riches* of Christ. It is deserving of particular attention, that the sacred writers never scruple to use large and general expressions when treating on the subject of redeeming grace; and that they employ the most unlimited phraseology in the calls, commands, and invitations, by which they carry into effect the commission of their wise and benignant Lord, who is "*rich* in mercy unto all that call upon him."—JOHN PYE SMITH.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER GOLDIE, Edinburgh.

ON THE SIN OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS;

A SERMON PREACHED BY APPOINTMENT IN ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON 27TH SEPTEMBER, 1835,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER GOLDIE.

"*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*"—MATT. v. 7.

IN turning our attention to the various excellencies which our blessed Saviour in this, his first, discourse to his disciples, pointed out as characteristic of his friends, in all the ages during which his religion was to prevail among men, there are two considerations which cannot fail to force themselves on our notice. In the first place, the harmony which subsists among all the various graces which he has introduced into his description; so that they all form one coronet of excellencies, most suitable to a perfect state of human nature, most fitted to harmonize with each other, and constituting altogether a character at once pure, peaceful, gentle, and benignant, disposed to see God in every thing "whereby he maketh himself known;" and, at the same time, to imitate him in all the perfections which his dispensations towards man point out as most distinctive of his own nature.

This is the first impression which we cannot fail to receive from the consideration of these truly christian attributes of character; and the second is the beautiful adaptation which exists between the excellencies by which men are distinguished, and the blessings which, under the moral government of God, are made to accrue to them, from the habitual cultivation of these graces in their individual character; so that to the "poor in spirit" is promised the most enduring and valuable of all riches; to "the peacemaker," the invaluable assurance of that favour of God, which tells man that his Creator is at peace with him; to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," the certainty of their being filled with the good things, after which they so sincerely long; to "the pure in heart," the capacity of seeing God in all his works and ways, which are the visible manifestations of him to his moral creatures; and, lastly, to "the merciful," the assurance of a corresponding display on the part of God, and with a reference to their own manifold failures and imperfections of the grace by which their own hearts and lives are especially distinguished. And, perhaps, among all the graces in this divine discourse, that which is especially recommended to our notice, in the words of the text, is the most characteristic in itself, and the most distinctly associated by the promise connected with it, with the corresponding blessing which those who cultivate that grace are authorized to expect from the parental pity and forgiving grace of God, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Indeed, it was not possible that our

Saviour, in making this enumeration of the virtues which he wished to inculcate on his followers, could have failed to distinguish the grace of "mercy," as we find him to have done, in the passage now under consideration; for he appeared among men as the anointed herald of divine pity to the human race. The blessings which he meant by all his instructions and precepts to diffuse among men, was, that of "Peace on earth and good will" to the whole sentient family of the Creator. Malignant feeling, in all its modes and degrees, was perhaps that which, of all other things, he was most anxious to root out from the bosoms of men; and seeking, as he did, to establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace upon earth, he could not but have looked with abhorrence on every thing that was out of harmony with this, his leading purpose, and been proportionally pleased with all those tendencies of the human heart, which, if in universal operation, are fitted to assimilate the condition of man on earth, to the perfection of that state from which, by its very definition, there is excluded "whatever offendeth, or worketh abomination."

It was not, however, the purpose of our Saviour in this, or any other of his recommendations, to *generate* in the soul of man any virtue or grace that had not a natural seat in their own hearts, when their nature was in its unperverted condition; and we accordingly find, when we cast even the most superficial glance on the essential tendencies of the human heart, that a merciful disposition may, in *one* view of it, be considered as congenial to the soul of man. It may be regarded, indeed, as a primary affection of our nature, to take an interest in the happiness of those with whom we are connected in the various relations of life, and to feel some degree of satisfaction in being able to alleviate their sufferings. When it thus takes such a strong hold on the moral feelings of man, we cannot be surprised that it was approved of by the teachers of ancient wisdom; although, when we bring this principle to the test of experience, we find, that it possessed but a feeble hold upon their practice; and a closer examination of their character confirms us more thoroughly in that picture drawn by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, where every species of iniquity is discovered, which the deep malignity of the human heart seems capable of having achieved.

The children of Israel, it is true, had been instructed in better principles. The first great commandment of their law bore so striking a similarity to the second, that they comprehended every branch and form which mercy could assume. And their prophets recommended, as duties more acceptable to God than any species of formal service or ritual obedience, "to undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free;" "to deal their bread to the hungry, and to protect the houseless wanderer." But the Jews, in general, did not live in the exercise of this law; for they had, in a great measure, impaired their sense of its obligation, and, by the tradition of their elders, "virtually rendered it of none effect." This appears from the testimony of our blessed Saviour in that sermon, of which our text forms a part; who, after professing that he came "not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil," has marked in various instances not only their erroneous acceptation, but defective practice of the law; while at the same time he has established a more correct interpretation, and sanctioned it by his divine authority. The Mosaic dispensation had said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." But the Jews had in a great measure destroyed its virtue by their contracted interpretation. They limited the relation of "neighbour" within the pale of their own country and religion. Towards the inhabitants of another state, or professing another creed, they considered themselves as released from the obligations of benevolence, and were even inclined to regard them in the character of enemies. The heathens, in general, were treated with contempt; while the Samaritans were beheld with enmity, little less than abhorrence; and thus their charity being impaired by every difference of opinion, the exercise of their benevolence became gradually contracted, and the scope of their compassion comparatively limited.

Our blessed Saviour, on the other hand, has given the fullest compass and effect to this great law of social affection: for he requires us to consider the whole family of mankind under the relationship of neighbours, and, as such, entitled to the exercise of the great law of benevolence, being partakers of the same nature, and sharers of the same bountiful providence. Hence he requires of us to "love our enemies;" to do good to all men; and, instead of satisfying ourselves by returning kindness for kindness, to extend our benevolence even to those who can make no suitable return, to render good for evil in every form of charity, not

only by our exertions, but by our services and prayers.

This blessed disposition, so powerfully recommended in the precepts of our divine Instructor, was more fully represented and embodied in his own spotless example. It was in mercy to man that he left the bosom of the Father, and submitted to experience, in his own person, the sorrows and the wants of human nature. His whole pilgrimage on earth was one continued exercise of charity towards mankind. He went about doing good. While he displayed his affection, by administering to their bodily afflictions, he bound up the broken in heart. While he preached the Gospel of glad tidings of salvation to be a witness to all men, he showed that the song of angels, which proclaimed "peace on earth, and good will to men," was exemplified in him. His benevolence towards the human race, thus continued through "scenes of toils and of sorrows," was rendered still more conspicuous at the close of his life. To bring us into a state of reconciliation with God, and to procure for us that mercy which we had forfeited by our own sins, and which we were unable to recover by any act or service of our own, he willingly submitted to labours greater than ever were experienced in this world. And though the taunts and insults of an infuriated rabble mingled with the last sounds which broke upon his ear, yet so solicitous did he feel for even his merciless persecutors, that his last prayer on earth was breathed for their sakes: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

From the general sketch now given both of precept and example, we can have no difficulty in discovering who they are that can be called merciful in the view of the blessed gospel of our Redeemer. Sensible of the undeserved goodness which they derive from the "Father of mercies," they are anxious to express their sense of obligation by the extension of the same blessed principle towards their fellows. The charity thus felt is ever ready to discover itself in action; and to prove itself of that kind, which embraces within its wide compass all kindreds, and nations, and tribes. And it is in this way that such characters are entitled to the benediction of the text, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Even in the ordinary course of things, men may in some measure obtain this reward; for the fact is, that the heart, which most keenly feels for the woes of others, and exercises that disposition recommended in the text, not only commands, but receives the approbation of mankind. But the spirit of our Saviour's promise applies more particularly to the mercy which they may expect to be extended to them at the final judment, on the great day of the Lord. This motive, you are all aware, possessed little or no influence on the conduct of the heathen; for as they entertained no correct idea of a superintending providence and the remunerating care of heaven, so when they had an opportunity of exercising a spirit of revenge, they were seldom restrained by the apprehension, that, in the general course of events, they might in their turn be exposed to a severe retaliation.

Nor did this motive operate with greater effect upon the Jews, who had so often experienced the clemency and compassion of the Almighty. To this people he appeared in the majesty of his justice, more than in the softer beams of mercy. Independent of all this, however, even under that dispensation, he is frequently characterized as "long suffering," "slow to anger," and of "great mercy towards those who love and keep his commandments." This divine attribute, indeed, forms the constant theme of the Psalmist, who had experienced it both in his domestic and civil capacity; and there is no sentiment of more frequent occurrence in the songs of Israel, than that "His mercy endureth for ever." This mercy the Almighty was ever ready to discover to those who repented of their sins, and turned unto him with their whole hearts; and it was particularly shown to those who copied him in the same blessed attribute. Thus the Psalmist asserts it as an established principle in the moral government of God, that "with the merciful thou shalt show thyself merciful." And it seems to be, in the dispensations of his providence, a law of retributive justice, that as man dealt with others, so also should he be dealt with.

It was reserved for the Gospel of Christ to represent the God of nature in all the fulness of his mercy, compassion, and benevolence. Of this we have a feeling sense, when we consider that, by nature, we are in a state of sin, and consequently obnoxious to the wrath of heaven; and were the Almighty strict to mark our transgressions, we should not be able to abide the severity of his just displeasure. It was to cheer our drooping spirits, under this humiliating conviction, that he is made known to us in the last revelation of himself as the "Father of

mercies, and the God of all comfort and consolation," in that grand mystery of redemption and atonement whereby he reconciled the world to himself. And as brotherly affection was one of the peculiar qualities by which our Saviour sought to characterize his disciples, so "mercy" was that peculiar attribute by which God was represented to the repentant soul of man. In the Gospel of the Redeemer, the Almighty is exhibited under the endearing character of a "Father," as beholding with complacency the pious exertions of his children; as lamenting over those who had wandered from the true path, yet looking upon them with parental regard, and employing every means that are consistent with a state of moral discipline, to recover them from the error of their ways; and when, by salutary warnings, they are brought to a true sense of their condition, he is represented as going forth in the spirit of compassion to receive them, reinstating them in the honours from which their vices had estranged them, and rejoicing over their restoration from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

But this divine mercy, this glorious attribute of his nature, upon which the hope of sinful man is founded, and which alone holds out to the human race the prospect of again becoming the objects of divine compassion, must not be regarded as an unconditional indulgence; for, in order to become the recipients of it, we must comply with those terms of grace by which alone this mercy can be extended. We must have a lively faith of the riches of the mercy of God in Christ; we must sincerely repent of those sins which demanded the price of his blood; and we must make it our constant endeavour, with an humble dependence on divine assistance, "to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service." As, however, the more immediate condition and appropriate means of obtaining mercy for ourselves, is to exercise compassion towards our brethren; so it is consistent with every idea which we can form of the Almighty, that if we would entertain the hope of the extension of his commiseration, we must imitate this attribute of his character in our individual conduct.

Hitherto we have considered the attribute of mercy as displayed towards mankind by all the dealings of the Almighty, and founded our remarks on the precepts and example of our blessed Saviour, as the highest of all inducements, to lead man to extend to his fellows that mercy and compassion which he has himself so largely experienced. And, in the course of these observations, we have found what blessed effects would be produced were men but to follow the divine precepts of our faith, and in all things imitate the example of Him who has been revealed to us as "the way, the truth, and the life." There is still, however, one great branch of this subject to be discussed, which has a more particular relation to the peculiar circumstances under which we have this evening come up to the house of God.

Man does not occupy alone this department of the universe. On every side he is surrounded with the works of his Creator. And, unquestionably, if to those inferior animals with which creation is so bountifully stored, who live to alleviate our toils by their labour, or die to satisfy our hunger; if to these men can be persuaded to extend kindness, and to forbear torturing them with unnecessary pain, we are surely fulfilling the designs of that Being who rejoices in the happiness of every creature he has made; who, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," beheld with complacency the works which he had made, and pronounced them "to be good." Whatever has a tendency to destroy, or even to diminish this common happiness; whatever occasions an avoidable pang to any creature, which the Almighty has endowed with feeling or sensation, is, without doubt, offensive to this great and good Being, who hath regard to all the works of his hand. Not only every act of cruelty from man to man, but every act of cruelty from man towards the brute creation, we have reason to believe, is registered against him; and, to employ the words of an eminent writer upon this subject, "He that is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, will undoubtedly require of man, superior man, a strict account of his conduct to every creature intrusted to his care."

In advocating the cause, then, of those mute creatures with which we are every where surrounded, in lifting up our voice in the sanctuary in behalf of those creatures who cannot plead for themselves, we are surely not overstepping the line of propriety prescribed to the ministrations of the christian teacher; for there can be no doubt as to the justice of the assertion, that "the powers of the human mind cannot be more

honourably or usefully employed than in preventing the unnecessary extension of actual pain in the universe ; or in pleading the cause of that class of beings to whom nature, though she give capacity of pain, denied the power of remonstrating against their sufferings."

Is it possible, before such an audience, to lift up the voice on such a subject in vain ? The inhabitants of this country have been proverbial for their compassion towards the afflicted. Asylums have been reared for the reception of the wretched, and the stream of bounty has flowed copiously for their support. Individuals have called down a blessing upon their memory, by the endowment of charitable institutions, where the children of the unfortunate might receive the blessings of a christian education. Let real or even fictitious distress implore assistance, and, at such a moment, prudence restrains not a warm heart from yielding to the suggestions of an awakened philanthropy. But yet it is often found that the feelings thus noticed arise in the human breast only, on a consideration of the woes of man. The uncomplaining, but suffering brute creation is too often deemed an object neither fit for compassion, nor susceptible of feeling.

Now, it is without doubt, one of the first *objects* of man's care to relieve the sufferings of his fellows ; but surely the breast that can overflow with the natural emotions of kindness, may have some commiseration towards those silent, but no less suffering creatures, who occupy a lower grade in the grand scale of existence. Man was, indeed, formed the priest of creation, endowed with reason, and fitted to show forth the praises of his Maker ; and, in such a capacity, he ought to feel the high responsibility of his character, and place himself in such a position, as at once to evidence his consciousness of that distinction, and his anxiety to act up to its requirements. But how often is it discovered that this high office and power is disgraced by the occupant ? How often does his cruelty torment, when pity should prompt him to an opposite course of action ? How often is that power, which was given by the Almighty to man for the protection of his creatures, wantonly exercised either to injure or destroy ; to weary out existence by a fearful endurance of protracted misery, or to extinguish, for savage pleasure, what man can never restore ? And all this may be, and actually is done, without obtaining one beneficial result, without answering one purpose of amusement, unless it can be deemed amusement to witness the anguish, the tortures of the feeling, though speechless part of God's creation. Their cries and moans are extorted by what they are made causelessly to endure ; and they plead in language too plain to be misunderstood, and too pathetic to be disregarded, except by those who disgrace the name they bear. " The beasts of the field," says the pathetic voice of inspiration, " cry to Thee, and thou hearest them ;" and surely those sufferings unjustly inflicted, and heartlessly continued, must ultimately call down the vengeance of that Being whose ear is ever open to the cry of distress.

It were a tedious and unnecessary work to particularize instances of cruelty thus inflicted. The voice of nature cries aloud against such conduct. From the winged birds of the air, from the beasts which move upon the earth, and from the harmless inhabitants of the water, there comes a voice arraigning man for the wrongs they are made to endure.

How often are we called upon to witness the most generous and willing of animals, once the pride of an ungrateful master, which had carried him with ease and safety in the pursuit of pleasure, or in the accumulation of gain, now reduced by age and suffering to drag out a miserable existence, and subjected to cruel stripes for its inability to accomplish labours which, in its more vigorous days, it would have rejoiced to perform. View it sinking under a merciless load, yet goaded on by the cruel whip; while the very gains which it procures are expended not in furnishing the food which may sustain its existence and renovate its strength, but in purchasing the means of inebriety, which, in its turn, leads to all those numberless crimes which so fearfully pollute the well-springs of every kind and generous emotion, and degrade the natural dignity of man to a level with, and often below, the condition of the brutes which perish ! Need I mention its humble, yet meek fellow-labourer which, under circumstances equally affecting, is frequently presented to our view. The animal to which I now allude has obviously been destined by nature for the endurance of labour, and therefore furnished with the means of that endurance. But because thus formed, does it at all follow that it is to be unreasonably oppressed ? Because it is satisfied with the coarsest food, is it on that account to be subjected to

merciless deprivation? The misery to which it is exposed ought to every christian heart to be more a subject of abhorrence, because some of the sublimest recollections of our faith are identified with its history.

The intelligence and sympathy of our legislatures have, in a great measure, prohibited those exhibitions of wanton cruelty which were once so frequently presented during the progress to their fate of those animals which were destined to become the food of man; and too much praise cannot be bestowed upon them, not only for putting a stop to such unbecoming exhibitions, in so far as the animal was concerned, but in sparing the feelings and sympathies of the more humane part of the community.

But I have still farther to call your attention to a species of cruelty which, though not coming so offensively under our view, is still by no means less frequent. There is an animal which seems to have been especially destined by nature to be the friend and assistant of man. Throughout all the difficulties and dangers which beset the human being, it has ever proved itself the defender of his life and of his property. More docile than any other animal, it is the only one whose peculiar attachment to man induces it to leave its own species, and conform to the very dispositions of those who command it. And yet thus constituted and inclined, how frequently is it made the object of the most unparalleled cruelty. Confined for days, and weeks, and months, it is subjected to a species of excitement, in order to rouse its courage, that it may successfully contend with some other of its own species.

Even the domestic animal which ranges before our homes, signalized for its noble and courageous spirit, after being armed with weapons of human invention, is matched to lacerate and destroy its heroic antagonist, which has been similarly prepared for this cruel and unchristian spectacle. These are facts, the very knowledge of which shocks the general mind; but, oh! how brutalizing must such scenes be, not only to the spectators, but to the actors themselves! And let the simple question be proposed, For what is this done? Is it not to obtain gratification, which is to wither and dry up the best affections of their nature? Is it not to procure the means of cherishing those debasing passions which war against every thing that can be called good? Is it not to lead to a hazard of the honest gains of industry, perhaps to deprive a wife and helpless offspring of their necessary sustenance? Is it not to rouse the spirit of profanity, to excite the feelings of anger and revenge, and perhaps to lead to the deprivation of life? Yes, my brethren, if we look to the annals of crime, we shall find that some of the worst forms of guilt have had their origin amid such scenes; that the heart has there contracted, and fostered the most odious passions of our nature! And yet such scenes are common in this country, and among a people professedly calling themselves Christians! But how is it possible to reconcile such conduct with any principle or peculiarity by which our faith is distinguished? Will such actions in the great day of the Lord meet the approval of their omnipotent Judge? Are they the "merciful" who, in the language of the text, "shall obtain mercy?" No; if pursuing such a course of action, they at last leave this scene of their transgressions, what have they to expect but a "fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation?" "A righteous man," says Solomon, "regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." "Surely," says the inspired writer, "they shall have judgment without mercy, who have showed no mercy." "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh."

"Even the meanest insects," says an amiable writer, "receive existence from the Author of being; and why should you abridge their span or lessen their happiness? They have their little sphere of bliss allotted them; they have purposes which they are destined to fulfil; and when these are accomplished, they die. Thus it is with you. You have, indeed, a more extensive range of action, more various and important duties to discharge; and well will it be for you if you discharge them aright. But think not, because you have reason and superiority given you, that irrational animals are beneath your regard. In proportion as you enjoy the benefits they are adapted to confer, you should be careful to treat them with tenderness and humanity; it is the only return you can make. To the most worthless reptile, to the most noxious animal, some pity is due. If its life is dangerous to you, it may be destroyed without blame; but let it be done without cruelty. To torture is unmanly; to tyrannise where there can be no resistance, is the extreme of baseness."

It follows, from the general tenor of these

remarks, that cruelty in all its forms and modes of existence, especially implies the two following things :—In the first place, a perverse state of feeling on the part of him by whom the cruelty is perpetrated ; and, along with this, a state of suffering inflicted by his means on the creatures towards whom this ill-directed feeling is extended ; and, as in every form it assumes, it must, from these essential qualities of its nature, be an object of aversion and disapprobation ; in the case which is at present more immediately under consideration, and in which the inferior creatures are supposed to be the objects of it, there are the following considerations, which evince its peculiar deformity :—

1. In the first place, it is inconsistent with any just idea of the place assigned to man upon earth, and of the power granted to him over the other creatures, who occupy the same scene with himself. We call man the "lord of this lower world," and the powers conferred upon him by that rank, as they were originally given him by his Creator, are still continued to him through all his generations, and entitle him "to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." This power, indeed, he could have vindicated to himself by the very nature of the gifts conferred on him ; and in its due exercise it entitles him, in the first place, to use the animals for the support of his own life, and for the supply of such comforts as may minister to the enjoyment, and even innocent luxury of his condition ; in the second place, to employ the services of the inferior creatures as his assistants, or instruments in the execution of whatever purposes connected with the comfort of his domestic, or social, or private condition, he may think fit to carry into effect ; and, in the last place, to promote his own safety, even by the destruction of such creatures or forms of animal life as may, in any degree, interfere with the entire assertion of the right which the Almighty has conferred on him to be the chief agent of his purpose, for the progressive beautifying and improving the face of the world.

But while such ample powers have been bestowed on man, these powers, like every other endowment which has been conferred on any portion of the creatures of the Almighty, are accompanied with a condition, that it is within the just exercise only of such prerogatives that the true authority of man is limited ; and that as a compensation to the creatures for their abject condition, he is bound to use his authority with all just regard to their rights and comforts, and to feel that he has rendered himself unworthy of his place, and fallen even below the nature of the creatures whom he oppresses ; when he ceases to act under the sense of his responsibility, and none confessedly more certainly than for a becoming and righteous use of an authority which extends to those inferior animals who have, in most cases, no power of resisting his unjust inflictions. Man, in short, though "lord of this world," is in no sense entitled to consider himself as authorized to use the power of a tyrant over it ; and yet this power he does exercise in the most odious and reprehensible form, when he wantonly interferes with those feelings of sensibility, or, it may be, of ingenious emotion of a still higher order, which the God of nature has seen fit, in various degrees of perfection, to confer upon every form of life. The odiousness, then, of every exhibition of cruelty towards the lower creatures is made evident, I have said, in the first place, by its want of conformity with the true rank occupied by man, and with the powers that have been granted for the useful and effective occupancy of that rank.

2. The same odiousness is still farther, and more especially made manifest, by its utter want of harmony with the feelings and graces of character, which ought to belong to all who profess the christian faith. For the intimation of "peace and good will on earth," with which that faith was first ushered into the world, may fairly be considered as having been destined, in some sense at least, to extend to all the forms of life with which this department of the universe is filled ; and, at all events, nothing can be considered as more obviously inconsistent than that creatures, who are themselves bowing in the dust in earnest supplication for the tender mercy and forgiving grace of God, should yet at any time, and least of all, systematically show their own want of sympathy, in wantonly and relentlessly subjecting to suffering any portion of the creatures, whom divine wisdom has seen fit to assign, as their partners in existence, and, in many cases, as their necessary assistants for the execution of their most valuable schemes. Most certain, at any rate, it is, that wherever the spirit which ought to characterize the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus does actually exist, it will infallibly be accompanied with a tender regard

to all the creatures which God has made, and will dispose the heart that is so actuated to look on every form of life and nature with a feeling harmonizing, in some degree, with that of the universal parent, of whom it has been so strikingly said in the sacred writings, that "His tender mercies are over all his works."

3. Still farther—The evil nature of the cruelty against which we are remonstrating, may be made evident by its manifest and inevitable tendency to give a perverted character to the whole moral condition of him who indulges in it; and to prepare him for the worst exhibitions of the same capricious, or malignant, or tyrannical spirit towards any of his fellow-men with whose rights he may have it in his power to interfere, or with whose tranquil enjoyment of life he may be in a condition to intermeddle.

Nothing, indeed, is more certain, than that if any reckless or cruel feeling is permitted in any shape or degree to find a place in the breast, or to sully the actions of a human being, there is a natural tendency in every such feeling to extend itself, and ever to assume a more malignant aspect; as, on the other hand, the surest way of preventing all great departures from duty or from kindly feeling, is to crush such inclinations in their first forms of existence; and as it is thus true, that nature has afforded to the kind and right-hearted a constant opportunity of improving their humane feelings, as well as their moral sensibilities, so, on the other hand, any indulgence of a capricious or tyrannical disposition towards the least gifted of the inferior creatures is a preparation for a more fearful exhibition of malignity towards our fellow-men. And he who can unfeelingly look on any instance of suffering which his own hand or counsel may have caused, has surely the capacity of looking, with a corresponding degree of insensibility, on the deepest agonies that can wring the frame or the heart of his fellow-creatures, if power to occasion that suffering and opportunity to use that power should at any time, by an unfortunate concurrence, be united in his person.

4. And lastly. The odiousness of such conduct is made strikingly apparent by the consideration that the creatures against whom it is directed are pre-eminently those, of all the forms of animal life, which are least deserving of such treatment, to whom man is indebted for the most valuable services, either in the way of use or of comfort, and who are the most anxious to exert all their powers for the benefit of the ungrateful master, who so often and so unnecessarily treats them, for all their exertions, with unpitying and wanton cruelty.

It is not the wild beasts of the forest, whose cause we have now chiefly to plead, for they in some measure set the tyranny of man at defiance; and if they must yield to his power, only yield after a fierce struggle, which puts all intentional or wanton infliction of suffering out of the question. It is not the free and joyous inhabitants of the air or of the waters; for they too, by other and gentler gifts, only yield to the power of man when they are forcibly, or by guile, made to taste of that death which prepares them to minister to his enjoyment. But it is those more finely gifted, and so far as their sympathies and essential feelings are concerned, more humanly endowed creatures, from whom man derives his chief advantages and comforts; who delight to congregate around his dwelling; who are proud to consider him as their lord; who receive his caresses with affectionate gratitude; and, more than all this, who, even without any bribe from his affection or good will, are disposed to strain all their powers to the uttermost, that they may minister to his gratification, or be subservient to his uses! Oh! these are the creatures against whom the effects of his barbarity are so commonly directed; who, even when straining their very life's strength till they are ready to sink in his service, are yet punished and insulted as if they were unwilling for their tasks; and who, when their better days are gone, and they are no longer able to do what in their days of health and vigour it was the supreme delight of their hearts to have performed, are mercilessly denied all repose from their toils, and forced to exert even the last powers of life, till they fail for ever under the unsupportable oppression. It is not merely freedom from tyranny to which such creatures are entitled, but gratitude, and merciful and indulgent treatment; for it is a striking consideration, that they are in almost every instance most generously disposed; and that in the exention of the tasks for which nature intended them, and which alone man is entitled to exact, they are invariably more strongly urged to the utmost limits of their powers by the application of kindness, and by an appeal to that fondness of applause which nature has so wisely and

beautifully interwoven with their constitutions, than by a severity of discipline to which the thoughtlessness or cruelty of man may prompt him to expose them. And yet odious as the cruelty of which we are discoursing must from all these considerations appear to be, it is an unquestionable fact, that this is one of the great vices to which human nature is prone, in many instances, from the first consciousness of its powers, and which occupies the human being throughout all its subsequent history.

It is, in truth, one of the very first, as it is also one of the most disgraceful of those perverse propensities to which our nature is inclined, and may be seen debasing even the infant feelings of the human heart, in a way which no well disposed mind can behold without many melancholy, as well as disapproving sensations. It seems to be connected with a mistaken view, which the human being, even from his first consciousness of the place which he occupies in life, and of the superior powers which have been granted him, is disposed to take of the rights of those whom he thus perceives to be his inferiors in the grand scale of being. It is cherished by that love of sport and excitement, which, in some measure, makes part of the original nature of all human creatures.

It is often carried to its worst extreme, by that inordinate love of gain, which is so fruitful a source of the worst forms of human crime.

It not unfrequently proceeds from that tendency to indulge in causeless, and yet unrelenting passion, which is constantly making itself apparent in all hearts that are not under the habitual discipline of moral feeling and sound religious views. And sometimes, and in some even of its worst shapes, it is connected with that propensity to the indulgence of luxury, which so commonly extinguishes all good feeling in the human breast, and which prompts man to pamper his own selfishness at any expense whatever, to the just rights and happiness of the creatures who are to be the ministers of his indulgence.

It is amid such considerations of the awful extent to which this vice has gained dominion of the human heart, that we indeed feel all the force of the words of the sacred writer, "The beasts of the field cry unto Thee, and Thou hearest them;" and it is too, amid such thoughts, that we feel the awful load of guilt, which even from this aspect of the perversity of man, presses itself upon our notice, we also become more distinctly conscious of the adaptation of such a cause to the remonstrances which the voice of Christian sympathy can pour forth, and to the ministrations of that sacred office, to which no form of human guilt can or ought to be an object of indifference.

The means of correcting this great vice, then, so far as it belongs to the Christian office to aid in its correction, appear to be the following:—

In the first place. As the propensity to this species of cruelty often makes itself apparent in very early life, or on the part of the young, in wantonly sporting with the sufferings of the lower animals, all who have the early training of the youthful mind, as their peculiar duty and office, ought to make it a distinct object of their care to check all such incipient tendencies, and to discourage them by every mark of their disapprobation. The infant and the schoolboy may equally be taken under cognizance in this respect; and no parent or teacher can be considered as doing his duty to his charge, in the most efficient and considerate manner, who does not watch all such tendencies in their nature, and repress them by every means of just correction—by the strongest symptoms of disapprobation—and especially by the instillation of such better and wiser views of the duty assigned to man, and of the relative place in life which he occupies, as may of themselves, if they are carefully and successfully administered, dispose the opening mind, not only to reject all such practices with the abhorrence and contempt with which they ought to be regarded, but as contrary to the express commandments of Him "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid."

Second. The next method of accomplishing the same purpose is by the dissemination among all ranks of men, of sounder and more enlightened views of their actual station in the universe, and of the claims and privileges of even the least endowed orders of sentient beings, than have ever yet been familiarly adopted by mankind. It is not by bringing the nature of man to a level with that of the beasts which perish, but by enabling men gradually to see, that all the orders of sentient beings form, in one sense, a great band of brotherhood, that this benevolent purpose is to be achieved; and as the tendency of improved science is to lead mankind to respect more tenderly the rights of all their fellow-men, and as there never

was a time when this tendency has made itself more apparent than in the present age, we may, without extravagance, indulge the hope, that the same liberal and enlightened spirit will yet, in the progress of time, take for itself a more ample and impartial range, and that a period will arrive when the assertion of these rights, which men so willingly claim for themselves, will be advocated with an enlightened and persevering zeal in behalf of all who, along with them, breathe the same breath of life.

Third. Still farther, the peculiar lessons of the faith of the gospel of Christ may, in all cases, be applied with the greatest power for the realization of this effect; nor can there be a doubt that as the pure and benevolent spirit of the faith of our Redeemer is better appreciated, and its merciful representations more distinctly felt, every form of existence will be taken under the ministering care of its institutions and precepts; and, in the meantime, that wherever we can succeed in communicating that spirit to any of the individuals of our fellow-men, or in implanting that spirit in its native excellence, there assuredly shall we find fellow-labourers in this great work of mercy and of universal good will; and, while thus engaged, be made to entertain the sublime conviction, that, in our measure and degree, we are associated with those blessed spirits "who excel in strength, who do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word."

Finally. That great law of the divine administration, so distinctly pointed out in the words of our text, ought never, for one moment, to be forgotten by any class of men—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Throughout the whole moral dominion of the supreme mind, the rule may be considered as holding, that the qualities which men display in their conduct draw down on them a corresponding manifestation of blessings from the righteous dispensations of heaven. It is thus, that to the "pure" all things are pure; that the just flourish under the administration of that justice, which every where beholds with favour the upright; that the "forgiving" are authorized to expect, that as they remit their trespasses to men, God also, for Christ's sake, will pass by their iniquities; that the "pious," in earnestly seeking the favour of God, never fail to receive communications of His grace and of His spirit; and lastly, that those who throughout all their conduct show mercy to the whole family of the Creator, have a distinct assurance that they too, in their time of need, shall obtain mercy. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Amen.

ON SINCERITY IN RELIGION.

Of the many evidences that might be adduced, I shall select four, that appear to me indispensable; and I beseech you, to mark them with no light attention, while a worm of the dust, like yourselves—who is, like all of you, accountable, and, like all of you, must shortly render up his account—proves your souls and his own with the solemn question, Am I sincere in my religion? The first thing that will enable us to answer in the affirmative is, that there is no compromising spirit in our religion; that we "render unto God the things that are God's," without, what I may call, the discount of the world; that we do not deliberately or wilfully suffer "one jot or tittle of the law to pass unfulfilled."

This is a strong evidence of sincerity; and to prove that it is, if we look to the world, we find it wholly wanting in it. Men, who are in their hearts slaves to the world, and yet unable wholly to throw off the yoke of conscience, generally contrive to reconcile both, by constructing a system of religion for themselves; that they believe will pacify the one, and enable them to retain their hold of the other—they contrive a religion consisting of external forms, decorous language, and perhaps outward regularity; but which has not the power to extort from them the sacrifice of one beloved lust, or establish in their hearts that principle of unreserved devotedness to God, which is the only source of true religion. Hence we see them every where, and at every period of life, compromising for the vices they will not sacrifice, and the passions they cannot subdue, by exterior conformity and mechanical religion; and while their ill-concerted system deprives them of all the real enjoyments and genuine blessedness of Christianity, enough of its form and force are retained to render them uneasy in those indulgences it disturbs without banishing, and in the struggle to unite what cannot be united,—the service of God and the service of the world. The enjoyments of the latter are rebuked, checked, and withered; and

the attainments of the other rendered awfully precarious, if not absolutely hopeless. The sincerity of the Christian is evidenced by the absence of this compromising scheme. The entire service of God, the exclusive devotion to his spiritual interests, the conquest of every lust, the sacrifice of every passion—such is his object: his *object*, I say, because its attainment is not in all certain, nor in any perfect; but while he keeps this object steadily in view, while there is no conscious reserve of secret indulgence in the soul, no strong-hold of sin in the heart which holds out against divine power, while he feels that were the sacrifice of a right hand or a right eye required, it should be made—so long a Christian has a comfortable evidence of the sincerity of his profession.

Another, and scarce an inferior proof, is perseverance. There are few individuals who have not at some period of life felt religious impressions, and yielded, in some degree, to religious influence on their practice—but there is no permanence in the religious course of an awful majority—they "endure but for a season, but in time of temptation fall away." There is not a libertine whom his vices have not sometimes terrified into partial reformation, whom his conscience has not lashed into an attempt to escape from its scourge. Nay, those whose consciences are not perhaps so terrific, nor can reproach them with excess or enormity—even they feel from time to time the necessity of amendment, and waste life in what are called good resolutions—partial efforts at reformation feebly commenced, heartlessly conducted, and hopelessly concluded: and this is because such efforts commencing in nature must end in nature—that which is born of the flesh is flesh—imperfect and corrupt, they partake of the defects of the source from which they are derived, a soil that can bring no fruit to perfection. But the Christian—who can look up to "Him who hath begun a good work in him," and rest satisfied that he is able to accomplish it, and to "keep his people through his own power by faith unto salvation"—the Christian has a source of confidence and joy that the world cannot give, and the world cannot take away. Here, indeed, is the only security for perseverance in the service of God, and it is a security that never can or will be shaken. The Christian, with this confidence as his support, may rejoice in his perseverance in the service of God, as an evidence of his sincerity; and renewing that confidence by prayer and by faith, by the cultivation of every gracious and holy affection, and the exercise of every good word and work, he will "go on from strength to strength, and unto the God of gods appear at last in Sion."

Let me not be thought to trifle on this subject, nor diminish its importance by nugatory subtleties or shallow minuteness, when I add, that in my mind a strong evidence of sincerity in religion is, that it bears the test of solitude, and does not desert or upbraid us in the hour of lonely reflection. So universal are the workings of pride, prejudice, and error, that there is great need of distinguishing between the effects they produce on professors of religion, and the operation of very dissimilar causes, that end in producing the same effects. Thus, passion will produce zeal in religion, of which the outward evidences will be as intense and radiant as if the fire was kindled from heaven, and the seraph himself brought the coal from the altar—pride will produce perseverance in the cause we have embraced—and a saint himself cannot be more steady in truth than the martyrs of error. And so of the rest—every passion and every vice may assume the disguise of an angel of light. But the system they defend, and the consequences they suggest, will not stand the test of solitude. The excitement of a crowded assembly, of an able antagonist, or the wish to display eloquence, and signalize talent, will lead a man far in the defence of topics to which he is in his heart and soul totally indifferent; but when he communes with his own heart, and in his chamber, what consolation will he derive from those applauded doctrines? It is the truth that whispers peace to the heart, not that which ministers pride to the ear, that bears the evidence of sincerity. The doctrines, the principles, and the consequences, that stand the test of solitude and meditation, of loneliness and abstraction; that form the stay and comfort of the heart in the darkness of midnight, the desertion of sickness, and the silence of the soul; these are they that establish a proof of their sincerity, triumphant to reason, and refreshing to the conscience.

But the last, the greatest, the indispensable proof of sincerity, that before which all others fade and shrink away, and without which, indeed, not one can be an admissible evidence, is the conformity of our lives to our principles. Other evidences may de-

ceive us—but this never can: others may be misinterpreted—but this bears a superscription legible to men and angels; yea, current in the treasury of Heaven itself. The eloquence of an angel, and the zeal of an apostle, if he reasoned with the force of Paul, and felt with the energy of John, could not bring such conviction of the sincerity of our religion, as a life corresponding to its dictates. If this exists, no other can be wanting—if this be defective, no other can be substituted for it. To this the scriptures refer—to this the apostles call us—this Christ himself erects, as at once the standard and the test of all sincerity. "Not they who say unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven," but those that do the will of his Father. To this test let us bring our lives and our consciences, and the former will be purified, and the latter enlightened. By studious and conscientious perusal of the Scriptures, by the effectual fervent prayer of faith, by a solemn vigilance, a godly jealousy over ourselves, in effecting a conformity between the truths we profess and the practice we exhibit, shall we be enabled to discover our sincerity; and God grant that the trial may justify our hopes, and establish our security! We cannot be mistaken either in the means or the end of our inquiries, if they are pursued with zeal, with seriousness; ay, if we are but in earnest in the pursuit. Oh! then, wake—wake to the inquiry,—the destination of an immortal soul, the interests of eternity hang on it;—and do ye yet pause, and do ye yet delay? Delay it no longer; press on your souls the tremendous question; urge it in silence and retirement; "commune with your heart, and in your chamber"—press it on yourselves with that solemnity that becomes beings who must one day answer at the bar of God, in the presence of worlds, with that solemnity which becomes beings whose salvation waits on the answer, whose immortal destination trembles between the words, Yes or No. Oh! seek not to deceive yourselves; it is only yourselves that *can* be deceived: God cannot, nor even your fellow-creatures long: a deathbed may unmask the vain professor—eternity must. Seek not to deceive yourselves; you alone will be the sufferers by the deception, and none will be enriched but the enemy of souls. Miserable deception! when we strain all the powers of a sophisticated mind to defraud ourselves of everlasting happiness. I do not speak of wilful, deliberate hypocrisy—the sin, I believe, of few—I speak of habitual self-deception—the sin, I fear, of millions—millions, who rise up and lie down under the dreadful illusion that they are sincere in the profession of the Gospel; while their actions, their habits, their tempers, and their language, are every hour setting its precepts and its spirit at defiance. Oh! let them err no longer: let them open their Bible; and, when they read one page of it, let them read another page of their own lives, and pronounce where is the conformity, where is the consistency? Where, then, is the sincerity? In that book, written by the finger of God, they will read, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And have we, then, that spirit? Its fruits are easily known—are they visible in our lives? In that book they will read, that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." Have we done so? Let me not be misunderstood: perfection is the dream of the enthusiast, sincerity is the test of the Christian. The fanatic may think he has subdued all the evils of nature: the Christian will feel that he is aiming at the conquest—that he is, if not always a conqueror, at least always contending, and that he shall at last be triumphant, not in his own strength, but in that which is promised him from above, and which shall be given him. Oh! one such question, solemnly put, is sufficient to tear off the mask, which we varnish with such miserable art, and show us in the same moment what we are, and what we must be. How shall we abide this examination? We must undergo it either in time or in eternity: we must "judge ourselves," or we must be "judged of the Lord." If, on the trial, our "hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God:" if they do—still there is hope—hope for the penitent—hope for him who humbles himself before God; and who, henceforth taking the word of everlasting life for his guide, and the careful and conscientious examination of his own for the proof of his sincerity, shall humbly and faithfully endeavour to produce that conformity between them which is the only test that will be admitted here or hereafter. If our pretensions are hollow, even here men will deride us, and the Son of God will deny us hereafter; if you are sincere, the "root of the matter is in you"—the hope and the promise are yours. On, soldier and servant of Jesus Christ! the contest may be sharp, but the victory is certain.

MATURIN.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ABERCROMBY L. GORDON,
Aberdeen.

THE NECESSITY OF A UNION BETWEEN RELIGION AND EDUCATION, THE ADVANTAGES THEREOF, AND THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR SEPARATION;

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE VERY REVEREND THE PROVINCIAL SYNOD OF ABERDEEN, 13TH OCTOBER, 1835,

By the Rev. ABERCROMBY L. GORDON,
Minister of Greyfriar's Parish, Aberdeen, and Moderator of the Synod.

"*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*"—HOSEA iv. 6.

MY design, from these words, which refer to the knowledge of God, is to endeavour, in humble dependence on divine grace, to show, in the first place, the necessary connexion which subsists between religion and education; and, in the second place, to describe the advantages of such a union, and the evil consequences of their separation.

I. It may be the means of leading to a simple and satisfactory view of the necessary connexion between religion and education, if we commence by explaining the import of this latter expression. Now, the very word, education, suggests the idea of preparing the young for the great duties incumbent on them in the various relations of life; and, with a view to this object, includes the communication of knowledge, the inculcating of right principles, and the formation of corresponding habits in those who are thus to be the subjects of it. But here the question occurs, What are we to understand by the great duties incumbent upon us in the different relations of life? This is not an imaginary difficulty, if we consider the views which no inconsiderable number appear to entertain. They seem to think that, in the possession of certain faculties, placed in certain situations of various kinds, and of greater and less degrees of importance and responsibility, they are called upon, if they would arrive at stations of authority, wealth, or comfort, to perform the duties attached to them, which is all quite correct, if the belief were not indulged at the same time that this having been done, they have answered the purposes of their existence, and may leave this world in the hope, should there *be* a future one, (of which they seem doubtful,) of their being made partakers of its enjoyments, on account of the excellent manner in which they have discharged their present obligations. Objections, indeed, may be made to the accuracy of this description; but every one who has examined with only superficial attention the development of men's views and principles in their actual conduct, will acknowledge, that, with such variations, as a diversity of circumstances renders necessary, it is applicable to not a few even amongst those who profess to be very differently influenced. And although they may disclaim such thoughts, be indignant at such an appellation, yet the men who

think and act in this way can be regarded only as so many practical atheists, as they completely exclude God from any right to the homage of his rational creatures, and reduce man to the degradation and wretchedness of a being who, whatever other heights he may attain, is incapable of rising to the knowledge, the love, the service, and the everlasting enjoyment of his Maker. In opposition to such views, we say, that even reason and conscience, above all the Word of God, declare, that man is endowed with a nature that renders him capable of communion with the great, eternal, glorious God; nay, that the advancement of the praise of this God is the very end of his existence; whilst, at the same time, his moral being is so constituted, that, in the prosecution of this end, present and everlasting happiness will be attained. Indeed, on this ground it is, that the most clearly marked and decided distinction between him and the brutes that perish is to be traced.

We are aware, however, that this distinction, and the duty of man as flowing from it, may be acknowledged, and yet the principles and conduct which we believe ought to characterize those who maintain it, be repudiated. Early education and the power of conscience have combined in leading men, in this country at least, to have some sort of idea of the glory of God, as at once the motive to action and the reward of it, whilst operated upon by the nature and unsubdued enmity of their hearts, and advancing no farther in the path thus pointed out than is agreeable to themselves, they present the spectacle of men who, with the confession of the truth on their lips, can live in the entire absence of regard to it, nay, with the presence and prevalence of a very different principle. The forms in which this mode of acting is exhibited are very various, so also are the reasonings by which it is supported—reasonings not founded on the Word of God, but on the ignorant, selfish, polluted suggestions of the heart of man. In short, if the former was practical atheism, this is practical infidelity; and as we have escaped from the one, so let us here ask how, whilst the truth of man being destined for the glory of God is confessed, is this state to be attained? or what rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? We thrust from us every answer to this question, which such reasonings as those already adverted to may furnish. We say, that on such subjects man is, and has ever proved himself to be, a darkened and deceived creature, continually combating his own impotent conclusions, and seeing no end in wandering mazes lost. Is there a revelation, we say, by which we can be guided? Has light from the source of all knowledge and truth dawned upon us in the midst of this deplorable ignorance? If so, what is the import of this authenticated message from that God in whom we live, by whom we die, and before whom we will be summoned to appear in judgment? Here too we are met by persons who not only acknowledge the principle first contended for, but also that the Word of God, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only, (as *we* say,) it is a satisfactory and sufficient rule given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God. But it is so difficult, *they* continue, to arrive at any very decided interpretation, to lay down without hesitation, as upon its authority, what is therein propounded as the will of God, and the duty and destiny of man. Now, as to these views, we remark that they are both erroneous in themselves, and utterly inconsistent with the acknowledgment that accompanies them. What! shall it be said that a revelation is given by the infinitely wise and gracious God to man so enigmatical as that, whatever may be our guesses, we are utterly unable to resolve it, and may therefore, for practical purposes, abandon it altogether. This most certainly is the ground which they must be held to occupy who express such sentiments as have been described; whilst believing from the heart the truth which they only profess, we declare, in simple consistency therewith, that, after an honest and prayerful examination of the Word of God, the state of man, and his duty as arising out of it, will be clearly ascertained. And, blessed be God, that whatever be our differences on other subjects, there is among those who hold the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of life, a general and most remarkable agreement upon the great primary truths of revealed religion. They agree in holding the sinfulness and the guilt of man, and his subjection to the displeasure of an infinitely holy and just God. They unite in declaring the utter inability of man to avert by any sacrifices, by any righteousness of his own, the fearful consequences of his transgressions. They acknowledge the marvellous mercy of God displayed in the

humiliation, righteousness, atoning sufferings and death of his eternal Son. They confess the necessity of repentance towards God, and of faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the genuineness of both being manifested in a change of heart and holiness of life. They avow, because of the blindness and insensibility of man, the necessity of a divine influence even of the agency of the Holy Spirit, in order to quicken the sinner, and to make him "flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel;" and that when thus united to the Lord Jesus Christ, pardon, adoption, sanctification, every present, every future and eternal blessing will be his. These truths, we humbly rejoice to think, are conceded by nearly the whole Protestant world, as those which are set forth in the revelation of the glorious God; and as we see that they declare to us the truly miserable state of man, in regard both to this and a future and everlasting existence, by reason of his alienation from God, and that if peace would be his portion here, and blessedness his state hereafter, he must turn unto Him by faith in the Redeemer, so the way is now very clear before us. Is it true, then, that by education we mean the preparation of the young for the great duties to which they are called? Is it true, that the first great duty of man is to glorify the God who gave him life and every blessing? Is it true, that the word of God alone reveals the way by which this great end may be attained? Is it true, that this is a brief, but accurate compendium of its contents? Then we say, with all the unreserve and determination suitable to a declaration on a point so clear, that religion ought to be looked upon as the very first and most essential part of education; that its truths ought to be inculcated in the precedence, and with the urgency which they thus obviously demand; that, in short, as the knowledge and the influence of them are infinitely important, whether we contemplate the present or the eternal welfare of man, so they ought to occupy a corresponding place in every system designed to prepare for the duty and the destiny which await him. Let us observe, too, with the same decision, because set before us in the same clear light, that when we speak of religion as thus forming the first and most important part of education, we allow not any arbitrary, partial views, such as those would consent to who are pleased to condescend to the acknowledgment of a God of nature, and of a future state of rewards and punishments. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no truth in them." To the revelation of God in the Scriptures, we appeal and say, that whatever they make known, however it may be regarded by the worldling who apes philosophy, or the so-called philosopher who apeth the wisdom of the world, must be inculcated as "the wisdom of God and the power of God." The awful state of man by nature, the truth, the mercy, the grace of God in Christ, the necessity of faith in Christ, in order to a discovery of the nature of God; in order to the maintenance of love to God; in order, in short, to the peace, the purity, the happiness, arising from communion with God, must be inculcated in dependence upon, and in earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit, who alone "teacheth us to profit." As in short, there is no God but the living and the true God, no true religion but that which proceeds from him, so there can be no true religious education but that which is based upon the Word of God, and carried on in obedience to its authoritative and important truths.

Such, as we might anticipate, is the ground on which the question rests in the volume of inspiration. We find even in the Old Testament that the knowledge of religious truth is out of all comparison set forth as the great object of education. "These words, (Dent. vi.) which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." In the New Testament we find not a few impressive exhortations and allusions to this duty; and if they are not more numerous, and direct, and full, assuredly it was for other reasons than that the writers regarded it not as one of the very highest magnitude. Methinks those who were authorized and inspired by God to declare his message of mercy through our blessed Redeemer to guilty man, saw so clearly the pollution of his natural state, and the danger of his natural condition—the truth, the importance, the sufficiency, the excellence of the salvation revealed in the Gospel, and the wisdom and the necessity—the obligation in every view of communicating at the earliest period the knowledge thereof, that

presuming on the certainty of all who believe in these truths, seeking to impress them without delay, and with the greatest earnestness on the minds of their children, they left the discharge of it in a great measure to the inevitable influence of faith on the Son of God in the heart. Such was the spirit of our forefathers when, in describing the necessity of schools, they say,* "seeing that God hath determined that his people here on earth shall be taught not by angels, but by men, and seeing that we are born ignorant of God and of all godliness, of necessity it is that your honours be most careful for the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm, if either ye now thirst unfeignedly in the advancement of God's glory, or yet deem the continuance of his benefits to the generation following; for as the youth must succeed to us, so we ought to be careful that they have knowledge and erudition to profit and comfort that which ought to be most dear to us, to wit, the kirk and spouse of our Lord Jesus." Such, too, is the account given of the nature and design of education by our great poet,† when, in his tractate upon that subject, he says, "The end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents, by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him as we may the nearest, by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection." So generally and strongly, indeed, have views corresponding to this of the renovation of the soul, the conformity of our wills to God as the great end of education, been entertained, that one is at a loss to point to the period or the examples in the history of the christian world, where they have not either been approved and acted on, or where, if disregarded, the omission has not been viewed with abhorrence and marked with deserved infamy. So obvious and indispensable appears the necessity of this union between religion and education, that a feeling of mingled incredulity and amazement is produced on the first observation of any attempt to separate them. We wonder at the very idea of excluding what bears with the most powerful and salutary influence on our present and everlasting destiny, from the education which is designed to prepare us for the attainment of the great end of our being. This feeling however subsides, when we reflect on the moral nature of man, that it is "enmity against God." We see in this attempt only another proof of his awful indifference and opposition to God; another manifestation of the desire to banish the knowledge, the thought of Him from the world which he has made; another evidence of Satan seeking to establish his power against the kingdom of God; and, for this purpose, having first thrown the dust of infidelity into the eyes of the parents, to seize upon their children, and bringing them up in the neglect of God, and of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, and under the full sway of all those evil passions which he has at once introduced, and constantly nourishes, even by the aid of human, unsanctified learning, to make them in this way the more willing coadjutors in his enterprize. So far from being amazed, we now see that all this was to be expected; and being thus prepared for it, may be permitted to say without the charge of a rude assertion, that when such an attempt as that now commented on is made, it can only proceed from those who know little, and care less about religious truth—from those who themselves doubt its certainty, see not its importance, feel not its obligations. To me it appears utterly impossible, on any other ground, to account for the exclusion of religion from the education, whether private or public, of the young.

We are aware, indeed, of those who profess to acknowledge, in all the extent and importance in which it has now been exhibited, the duty of this christian training, but aver, that it will be most efficiently, and ought to be exclusively, discharged by the parents. Now, whilst the necessity of religious instruction is by this opinion conceded, yet as we contend for its introduction into our Schools and Universities, as well as into the domestic circle, we must say that the attempt on such a pretence to justify its exclusion from the former, so far from shaking our confidence in the opinion so lately expressed, only strengthens it, and makes us strongly suspect that those who urge this plea are as careless about the christian education of their children at home as they are abroad; and we must confess that our experience in these matters serves but to confirm our suspicion. We readily admit, that there is in the nature and infinite importance of religious truth, and in the relation in which parents stand to

* First Book of Discipline. † Milton.

their offspring, what lays them under a peculiar and most powerful obligation in this respect, and far, very far, be it from us to diminish in the slightest degree the force of it; but we cannot conceive the reasons that would thus induce them to limit their concern for it to these opportunities. Nay, we presume, that the more anxious the parent is for the religious well-being of his child, the more desirous he will be that christian instruction should be communicated in public, as well as in private, in school, as well as at home, by every means, and on all occasions, when it can be done with propriety and advantage. Besides all this, how many are there who, whether from ignorance, unwillingness, and inability of various kinds, neglect in a great measure, or altogether, this infinitely important duty, and thus create an additional reason for a regard to it in our public institutions. But the conclusive consideration is, that when young people are for such a lengthened period, and so earnestly engaged in the acquisition of other knowledge, the duty at all times of supreme obligation ought on this very account to be the more frequently and impressively inculcated upon them of rendering it subservient to the glory of God. And the institution which is not conducted upon this principle is, we were going to say, a heathenish institution; but it is worse than heathenish, as the knowledge of religious truth, so far as they understood it, was regarded as not the most unimportant part of the instructions of an ancient teacher. It is said again, by those who profess the principles already laid down, that they only doubt the application of them to public seminaries in the way described, because of the difficulty of fixing on a standard of religious instruction likely to meet with general acceptance. Now we are very suspicious also of him by whom this objection is urged. It is to be apprehended, and a little observation will confirm the fear, that it is pressed by those whose views on the important subject are not very clear nor decided. But, as before stated, there is no foundation for it in theory or in fact. The Scriptures contain a clear, definite revelation of the will of God; and nearly all the inhabitants of this country, whatever may be their differences in other matters, profess their agreement in the fundamental truths of the Gospel, so that there could be no difficulty in the way of arrangements for communicating them to their children. Upon the whole, then, we repeat, after a consideration of the objections, as well as of the case itself, that the man who would exclude Christianity from education has no ground to stand upon, and must rank, if he persist in it, with those who care not for religion in the young, because indifferent to it themselves. We find, accordingly, that those who advocate such a system have given numerous and decided proofs of their own opinions on the subject of religion, being such as have been described, and have thus afforded testimony to our belief of their proposed rejection of religion from education originating in this source.* The system itself, when carried into effect, farther betrays its origin, all its practical details being directed towards a preparation of such a kind as will lead to the attainment of this world's objects, to the entire exclusion of whatever connects man with God and with eternity. And, if we explore a little farther the workings of the plan, we discover the influence of the same views which gave it birth, in the employment of means "for the diffusion of useful knowledge," to the almost complete exclusion of religion, as if it alone were useless. In short, we observe a powerful and constantly enlarging machinery set in motion, designed to operate upon man in every way, except as capable of the knowledge and enjoyment of God, and which produces, as the result of the whole process, a refined modification of our selfish, worldly natures, and places us very little above the condition and destiny of the brute creation. To what a horrid degradation would we thus be reduced, all the more remarkable, too, as proceeding from a system, the contrivers of which assume the title of the friends of the people, anxious for their moral elevation and true welfare, and are accustomed to brand, as narrow-minded bigots, those who contend for a very different plan of education. Narrow-minded bigots indeed! It would not be difficult to determine those to whom the epithet is most applicable, whether to the persons who seek to confine man's views to the mere created objects of the world, or those who would enlarge the sphere

* The doctrine, that man is not accountable for his belief, was, not long ago, propounded to the students of a University, by their Lord Rector. A very different sentiment, we rejoice to think, was expressed at the commencement of the present session of Marischal College by its eminent and respected Rector, Dr. Abercrombie, in an admirable address, which it is hoped will be made public.

of his investigation, and teach him to look through nature up to nature's God. The friends of the people, anxious for the welfare of the human race! Who deserve this character? the persons who would confine our search for happiness to a world which all in every age have pronounced to be an unsatisfying, miserable, transitory scene, with the prospect of an everlasting continuance of its wretchedness, or those who, believing that man is unhappy because he is unholy, would desire to bring him back to communion with God through faith in a Redeemer, and so make him partaker, even in this world, of the peace which passeth all understanding, and give him good hope through grace of an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away?

II. Having thus endeavoured to show the necessity of a union between religion and education, I now proceed, in the second place, to describe the importance and advantages of it, and the evil consequences of the opposite system. And here we would remark, that we are not to consider the moral nature of man as a field on which, as if ignorant of its qualities and the proper mode of cultivation, we may be allowed to make experiments, with a view to ascertain how much and what kind of produce it is capable of yielding. We affirm at once, and upon the best authority, that man was originally framed so as to derive happiness from the knowledge, love, and service of God; and that though now he maintains not communion with him, yet that still it is true, that the faculties and affections with which he is endowed will never move in order, with harmony and with effect, until that communion be restored. It is when the love of God is shed abroad on the heart of fallen man that the different parts of his moral constitution will resume, as it were, their proper place and connexion, and that he himself will be enabled to act as he was designed for the glory of God, in all the varied relations in which he stands. The means by which, in the present state of man, this blessed change is produced is not this or that other system, this or that kind of knowledge, but it is faith in the Son of God, through whom the soul rises to the recognition of God himself, and again maintains fellowship with Him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The building raised upon this foundation, even although the former materials are employed, will, under the guidance and the power of God, rise in symmetry and beauty, until the "head-stone thereof is brought forth with shoutings, saying, Grace, grace unto it." In simple language we state, that when religious knowledge, even that contained in the revelation of the Gospel, is communicated and made effectual for the conversion of the soul to God, man is under the influence of that principle which will most certainly and with increasing strength, constrain him to the discharge of every obligation in regard to God, to himself, and his fellow-creatures, and thus fit him for the attainment of the great end of his being. Put forth this knowledge in all its bearings, and you will do that which, with the divine blessing, will enable him to discharge with consistency and perseverance, with honour, comfort, and usefulness, the great duties of life.

But let us consider a little more particularly the nature and tendency of that system which is ordained for the restoration of man to that state wherein he will begin to "love God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and his neighbour as himself." We will not again even enumerate the great leading truths which characterize it, but suppose that an individual has been brought under the influence of them. He is convinced, by the Holy Spirit, of the utter corruption of his nature, of his innumerable and aggravated sins, of his danger, of his helplessness, he is directed to behold the perfect righteousness and complete atonement of the eternal Son of God, and how freely forgiveness, and every spiritual and eternal blessing are offered through Christ's mediation for his acceptance. Perishing and unable to do any thing for his deliverance, he is made to "flee for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Gospel;" and thus brought in faith to receive the pardon of his sin, he has peace with God, and rejoices in hopes of his glory. What a powerful and salutary influence must such views exert over him who entertains them in the relation, for example, in which he stands to God! How deep must be his self-abasement, how strong his gratitude not only in the remembrance of the divine mercy, as displayed in the humiliation and death of the blessed Redeemer, but in conducting him to the fountain thus opened up in his blood, and therein washing him from his sins! How, from a principle far more powerful than that produced by the contem

plation of the external world, magnificent and beauteous, and rich in mercies, as it is, will he be constrained to the love of God, and to a dedication of all that he is and has to the service of Him who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all. In such a connexion with the source of all wisdom, purity and holiness, will he be enabled to act from motives of the noblest and most invigorating kind, soaring above the grossness and changeableness of worldly considerations, and desiring, as if in the presence of a holy, heart-searching, and, as experienced by himself, a most merciful and gracious God, to glorify him in body and spirit, which are his. How greatly also will those principles be sustained by the hopes and promises of the Gospel; and how, if love and hope should at any time wax feeble, will he be hedged in the path of duty, and urged to the performance of it, by the warnings, the examples, and the threatenings of the Word of God! Survey again the situation of this individual in regard to the duties more immediately relating to himself. Whilst the light of reason and the power of conscience should teach him to hate and to subdue sin, there is superadded to the influence thence derived whatever faith in the humiliation and death of the Son of God, whatever the promises of heaven and the fears of hell, and also whatever a spiritual sense of the horrid deformity and base ingratitude of sin, supply. Thus he will seek, and strive in the strength of God, that every word and every action should be to his praise; and not only that things outward should be conformed to his will, but that his heart also should be purified, and himself become the habitation of the Spirit, and beholding, as with open face in a glass, the glory of the Lord be changed into the glorious image. And when, in divine Providence, he is overtaken by affliction or calamity, what a powerful support is afforded him in the humble hope that He, by whom these things are ordered, is his reconciled God in Christ; and that, whether in this or an everlasting world, they will be seen to work together for his good!

Now, behold this man in the relations in which he stands to others. It would be vain for us to attempt a display, however feeble, of the extensive, practical, blessed influences, in this view, of Christianity. We only refer to them, and call on you to consider the purity, the peace, the affection, industry, temperance, which it is the means of introducing into domestic life—the spirit of contentment, thankfulness, and of genuine patriotism—of diffusive, active, persevering benevolence on behalf of the religious and temporal interests of man, the virtues, in short, of every kind which, as from an abundant well-spring, will constantly flow forth from a heart thus enlightened by the Spirit, and guided by the word of God, to fertilize and beautify the whole field of social life. What a noble illustration of the power of christian truth to lead to these results is afforded in the change produced on its first promulgation to the Gentiles—idolatry with all its abominable rites, giving way to the knowledge, love, worship, service, and enjoyment of the one living and true God—the falsehood, selfishness, sensuality of their natural state disappearing, and being succeeded by truth, charity, spiritual-mindedness—"putting off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and being renewed in the spirit of their minds, putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Thus do we see, that as man is a religious being, and under the influence of love to God, will be directed and impelled to the discharge of every other duty, and to the attainment by this means of every desirable object, so such is actually the nature and practical tendency of the Gospel, and such will be the development of its truths when, by the grace of God, they have been received into the heart. Indeed, whether from a natural conviction which it is impossible to suppress, or from a feeling which education may have originated, and experience and observation may have strengthened, the importance and advantages of a religious education are generally acknowledged, and men meet with a ready and prevailing sympathy, however inoperative, when, in order to advance even the present interests of their fellow-creatures, they would urge the adoption of measures calculated to afford it. To our own land, especially in other and better days, we may be permitted to appeal in testimony of the beneficial effects arising from this source, when our young people were more carefully than now trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and when under the influence of religious principles, growing with their growth, and strengthening with their strength, they gained and have transmitted a character for

practical religion and true morality unequalled, we may say, in the history of the world. And degenerated, greatly degenerated, as we now are, we still see, especially when contrasting our situation with that of other lands, unequivocal traces of the blessed tendency of our religious and educational institutions; and if the great principles of the Gospel were taught with energy, affection, perseverance, and with prayer for the Holy Spirit in our schools; and if all this were accompanied with a more minute, zealous, and consistent superintendence, upon our parts as the pastors, oh! who could calculate the blessings that might thence arise? or say, that with a youthful population thus trained up, and afterwards acted upon by a faithful and prayerful ministry, a day would not dawn upon our church and country which, bright as were its former eras, would outshine them all!

But, on the other hand, let us now briefly contemplate the state of those who are allowed to grow up not only without a religious, but without an education of any kind. To mention the fact of such neglect, is of itself sufficient to suggest the awful consequences arising from it. As certainly as the river flows towards the sea, will the heart of man, wherein are the issues of life, pour out all the abominations, of which it is the abundant receptacle, and which the law of God describes as "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." And the history of man proves that this, as indeed it must inevitably be, is the result of such ignorance. To multiply examples would be tedious, as I believe it is unnecessary. One, out of thousands, must suffice, afforded by the Ordinary of Newgate, who says, "that going into the desk at the chapel, about seven or eight years ago, I saw twelve men in the condemned felon's pew, whose deportment and dress were decent and respectable. When I announced the day of the month and mentioned the psalm, I was astonished to observe that none of those convicts took up a prayer book, although several lay before them. In a conversation I had with them the next day, I inquired how it happened that none of them opened a prayer book during the service. Upon this, there was rather an appearance of confusion, and a dead silence. I put the question a second time, when one of them hesitating, stammered out, 'Sir, I cannot read.' 'Nor I,' 'nor I,' was rapidly uttered by them all."

But I confine not my assertion to the evil consequences of education altogether neglected, but bring it to bear upon the system which proceeds upon the belief of the numerous and great advantages arising from the cultivation of the intellect, and the diffusion of what is called useful knowledge, to the exclusion of religion. Here also the truth may be very easily apprehended. Is man an alien from God? Is he at enmity against him? Is the tendency of his nature not towards holiness, but towards sin? If these questions be answered in the affirmative, and who will dare to give a different representation, we say, that whatever hollow and artificial limitations, mere human knowledge may raise up, and whatever effects in reference to present worldly, personal interests they may occasion, the individual's true happiness will not thereby be advanced, nor the interests of the community ultimately promoted. Continuing, as before, at a distance from and in opposition to God, he must be a stranger to the peace and to the pure unfailing enjoyments which sanctified knowledge imparts. He will be the creature of circumstances, the slave of passion; and when the inhabitants of a country are generally composed of men with minds so far enlightened, but with hearts as uncontrolled as ever by the love of God, a scene will inevitably present itself of discontent, ambition, deception, selfishness, desire of change, turbulence, profligacy private and public, all covered over with a stuff that forms most befitting varnish for such a picture, and is denominated *liberalism*. It is not more certain that man's nature is prone to evil, from the absence of the love of God, than that continuing in this state, whatever may be his other attainments, such or similar will be the results. Utterance, indeed, cannot be given to a proposition more plainly true than this, whilst at the same time we are ready with many a proof and illustration of it. We might refer to not a few instances in our own country of those who, having made advances in literature or science, or who having received a mere elementary education, unaccompanied by the knowledge of religious truth, have shown how little influence these have had in administering to their happiness as men, or to their usefulness and respectability as members of society. We might refer to Ireland, too generally looked upon as a country the inhabitants of which were, until lately, destitute of all means of

education, and from it adduce innumerable instances of those who, possessed of more knowledge, only wielded it as an instrument for carrying into more complete effect, whatever their unrestrained passions might suggest. We might refer to France, vast numbers of the inhabitants of which possess the elements of learning, and not a few have minds enlightened by science and literature, and intellects highly cultivated; and yet when we contemplate the state of that most miserable country during the last fifty years, what a commentary does it afford on the description already given of the condition of a land, the people of which are thus educated. And behold their present situation as that of men who, having in their former ravings, rioting and shedding of the blood of hundreds of thousands of their fellow-countrymen, show symptoms of madness, had now come to a height beyond endurance, and required, even for their own safety, to be immured in a dungeon as dark and deep as ever slaves were thrust into. They, with Ireland, give, indeed, a living and literal illustration of the text, as a people destroyed for lack of sound religious knowledge. Look also to Hindostan. Bring to remembrance the representation of our respected missionary, Mr. Duff, whether delivered in the Supreme Court of our Church, or in our own hearing on the late occasion of his visit to our respective Presbyteries. Of the Hindoo youths educated in the Calcutta College, in the literature and science of Europe, *apart from religion*, he says, that all subjects seemed to be more or less tolerated by them but religion. Against religion in every form they raged and raved. They scrupled not to scoff at Christianity; they scrupled not to avow their disbelief in the very being of a God—thus realizing the condition of the men, described by an ancient author, who "fled from superstition, leapt over religion, and sunk into atheism."

One other system would we advert to, as illustrative of the evil effects arising from education unaccompanied by religion. We have spoken of the consequences of total ignorance, and have lastly shown the results of unsanctified knowledge. But there is a third plan, the one to which we now allude, whereby, conjoined with knowledge, instruction is communicated in what is called morality, meaning the duty which man owes to man. We repeat our expression of amazement at the omission in this system of morality, of the very first commandment of the moral law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and now only remark, that such a plan will be found as inefficacious for the end proposed as it is revolting. It is upon the basis of the knowledge and the love of God that the superstructure of genuine, practical morality is raised. To that great principle may all our other relative obligations be traced. In that light will the connexion and meaning of them all be most distinctly seen, and from it will they derive their greatest force; so that the boundaries which are set up on other ground, and are composed of other materials, will be feeble indeed, and will be easily broken through, at the impulse of passion or of self-interest. With this statement an acquaintance with human nature and our own hearts will prepare us for coinciding. Above all, such is the view presented to us in the Word of God. More especially, it sets before us, in the history of the Gentiles, the awful results of this unnatural and guilty separation of religion and morality. Notwithstanding the labours of their philosophers upon the latter subject—the excellent treatises which many of them put forth in explanation and enforcement of the duty which man owes to his fellow-creatures, yet all was in vain, because of the grace of God. "And even," says the Apostle, "as they did not choose to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Alas! for this kingdom, because the system thus described in its nature and results, has been introduced amongst us. A scheme of national education has been established in Ireland, in which the reading of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, is regarded as a "vital defect; and the schools are to be kept open for a certain number of hours, for four or five days in the week, for moral

and literary education *only*."* It is not our purpose at present to dwell on this scheme. The result of it may be predicted from its nature. Indeed it has already disappointed, in some degree, the expectation of its friends, and realized the worst fears of its enemies. And it should be still our effort and prayer that it may be overturned before such a judgment come upon us, as the word of inspiration declares respecting the Gentiles—a judgment more aggravated upon us, because of that knowledge of the living and true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, which we possess, but of which the nations were deprived. We will only notice further upon this subject, that we might receive a lesson concerning it even from some of that nation which we have already alluded to with reprobation. In the report for the establishment of a national system of education in France, by the minister of the department for public instruction,† there is the following passage. "We should be penetrated," he says, "with this truth, viz., that if institutions form the destiny of nations, it is morality which forms national institutions, and that the firmest basis of social order is the moral education of youth. We also understand," he continues "that morality is allied to religious convictions, and that the action of the conscience can be filled up by no other. It is Holland, Germany, and Scotland, which possess the most flourishing, the most effective schools of our epoch; and in all these countries religion is associated to primary instruction, and gives it the most useful assistance."

Lastly. In thus pointing out the consequences of a system of education separated from religion, we cannot avoid considering, as nearly allied to it, those seminaries, whether in town or country, wherein the great truths of revelation are superficially or coldly taught. That there are not a few of this description, is greatly to be feared.‡ We find abundant and melancholy evidence of the fact in the ignorance of the fundamental truths of Christianity observable in numbers of our people, and in many other features of our religious, moral, and social condition, traceable, we believe, in a great measure, to the want of an enlightened, vigorous, practical, heart-searching system of early christian instruction.

You are all aware, fathers and brethren, of the views which are too commonly entertained on the subject that has now engaged our attention, and of the means which are employed to give effect to them in the separation of religion from other branches of knowledge, and in the removal of all direct religious control over our educational institutions. I know your determination on this point, and that you are resolved, as one man, to resist the encroachments of such a debasing and guilty system; and that you will not be moved from your purpose by any clamour with which you may be assailed, ever sustaining yourselves, whilst adhering to it, by the belief of its being the ground of truth and principle, and of the design and tendency of your efforts, being to advance the interests, temporal and eternal, of the people. Yes, the people, the title of whose friends *they* would arrogate, who, by removing from them the faith, and hopes, and consolations of religion, in reality prove themselves, in every view, their very worst enemies.

But whilst resolved, in the prospect of such attempts, to act in this spirit of determined opposition, let us also see whether, in the situations which we occupy, so important and influential in regard to education, the glorious truths of the Gospel may not be brought into more frequent and familiar contact with the minds, and, through divine grace, be more deeply impressed upon the hearts of the young in our various seminaries, and whether, by a more active, encouraging, and prayerful superintendence of this department, we may not be still more instrumental in advancing its efficiency, and in diffusing more widely and plentifully than ever the invaluable blessings of a truly christian education.§

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* "Capt. M'Conachie read a long and interesting paper on the population and state of crime in France, from which he deduced the important fact, that education was not always a guarantee against the commission of crime, but was a mighty instrument either for good or evil, according as it was directed, and that the great object of education ought to be the cultivation of the moral feelings."—*Report of the Proceedings of a late meeting of the British Association.*

† M. Guizot.

‡ Lord Stanley's official letter to the Duke of Leinster.

§ With this view, the highly seasonable and meritorious labours of the General Assembly's Committee on education, now extended to large towns, and contemplating a more full inquiry into the state of our parish schools, in all parts of the country, will, it is hoped, meet with every support and encouragement from ministers and people.

CHARACTER OF THE LATE DR. ROBERT BALFOUR.

A SINGULAR acuteness and comprehensiveness of intellect, subdued, by divine grace, to the childlike simplicity, and elevated to the sublimity, of christian faith. A heart naturally warm and generous, refined, sweetened, sublimated by the powerful impressions of divine truth and love.

Originality of genius, and vigour of fancy, chastened and bridled by sound judgment and consideration.

One evidently born, and new-born, not for himself, but for public good: looking forth towards mankind with wise considerate benignity. Boldness, fortitude, firmness, tempered with modesty and gentleness. A spirit equally superior to the silliness of vanity, and to the sourness of envy. Frankness, candour, integrity, generosity, without taint or limit. Profound seriousness, spirituality and piety, without grimace; studiousness without stiff formality; occasional ease and gaiety without looseness or levity.

As the result and fruits of such principles of character, what a multitude of things offer themselves to our respectful attention!

A penetrating enlarged discernment, and burning love of divine truth, without the mixture of arrogance, haughtiness, or wild extravagance. A piercing, refined, exalted taste of moral excellence, and senses, in that respect "exercised by reason of use to discern both good and evil." A vigilant power to mark defects and blemishes even in superior characters, and those held in his own high estimation, and yet patiently to trace and value the effects of grace in their lowest and most homely appearances. But no malignant delight in talking of faults. A general aversion to unnecessary, unprofitable evil-speaking of every kind.

He saw clearly through the more refined and plausible graceless characters: he pitied them; and against hope believed in hope for the recovery of the worst.

What were his wise and faithful tenderness as a husband, a parent, an intimate friend, must remain undescribed.

Nor can it easily be imagined what he was respecting hospitality by those who have not experienced it, or expressed by those who have; or what feelings of home were connected with his habitation, to many individuals. In those who approached him in such situations, the sentiments of unbounded confidence were chastened with a sacred awe, lest any impropriety should catch his eye.—Who can do justice to the happy combination of pleasantry, benevolence, seriousness, instructive conversation, exalted piety, which, from time to time, manifestly reigned at his table?

If we are to take a wider range, and to give any delineation of his public pastoral ministrations, we must bring together the ideas of clearness, simplicity, original arrangement, familiarity, profound understanding, prudence, tenderness, zeal, loftiness. A great power of ornament, without the pride and affectation of ornament. We have seen him often ascend the chariot of fire, and hurry us away to the mysterious, heart-melting heights and depths of the love and sorrow of Calvary, and thence, with rapid flight, to the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In his ministrations appeared a singular ability to soothe and yet to wound, to encourage and yet to correct, to insinuate, as at unawares, with a kind of ease, the most awakening and humbling truths.

An admirable facility in bringing down truths the most abstruse and mysterious to plain minds; to mark the clear line of truth in the midst of intricacy and awful difficulty; to take hold of difficult truth by so fair a handle, as to make objections and prejudices to drop out of remembrance.

Such a faculty might, by some, be abused to their own hurt, by their *too soon* supposing themselves to know and embrace thoroughly those great truths which they heard with a soothing pleasure from *his* lips. Others might ascribe his often overlooking objections to a superficial way of thinking. But the fault, in these and other cases, was with the hearers; nor did such persons duly consider the variety and extent of his instructions, which, at one time or other, met directly almost every kind of difficulty.

But the benignity of christian love led him to dwell, most frequently and largely, on truths of a healing, cheering, refreshing nature. With what luminous sweetness and powerful tenderness these were often presented to view, many will not cease to remember as long as they live.

To him belonged, through grace, for we ascribe every one of these excellencies to rich grace, an almost inexhaustible fund of ious activity and wisdom.

He was a bold and steady friend of sound constitutional order and liberty, in things ecclesiastical and civil; equally averse to domineering deceit and iniquity, and to licentious selfish pretensions to zeal for liberty.

Such a character and ministry, continued steadily through so long a course of years, commanded attention and esteem in a very high degree. He became as a general centre of union among the serious and spiritual, in a considerable part of this country, and of different denominations: he was generally resorted to by serious visitants from distant places: he was sometimes a centre of friendly intercourse, where intimate union might not be practicable.

In this great city he was regarded by many, some of them in all the different ranks of society, as a kind of public parent.

I have endeavoured to mark out some of those features of excellency, in the friend whom we pleasantly remember and lament, which, separated from the dregs and dross of earthly imperfection, and with the heightening, enriching, and adorning of a state of finished glory, shall be found in him when we meet him hereafter. In this recital, I have felt the impulse of friendship, but not without the temperance and caution of impartiality. I am not conscious of having violated the purity of him who said, "I know not to give flattering titles." Job xxxii. 22. I have simply given the result of the observations of a long series of years of intimate acquaintance.

The maturity of wisdom, and the good influence, in almost every direction, which he attained, rendered his longer stay amongst us an object of warm desire. But his ripening for the superior regions rapidly advanced, especially from the time of the departure of his late excellent and highly amiable consort. The prayer of the Saviour prevailed, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am!"

Blessed saint! I shall think the more frequently of heaven, because thou art there; I shall look more steadily toward the multitude of the spirits of the righteous made perfect, because thou art one of them! And when, by the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, and by that mercy which is above the heavens, and which delivers from the lowest hell, the hour shall arrive of entrance into the high and holy place, amidst the astonishing solemnities and delights of that new situation, I shall soon look around to recognise thee, and to meet the sweetness of thy triumphant embrace!

LOVE.

MAN BY NATURE AVERSE FROM RELIGION.

RELIGION, it is acknowledged, brings its pains; just because it comes from heaven to maintain a deadly conflict in the soul, with principles and dispositions which are rebellious against heaven, and destructive to the soul itself. Nothing can be more thoughtless or unknowing than the strain in which some have indulged in the recommendation of it, as if it were all facility and enjoyment. You have possibly heard or read graceful periods of descant on the subject, representing to young people especially, that *their* unsophisticated principles, *their* lively perception of the good and the fair, *their* generous sentiments, *their* uncontaminated affections, are so much in unison with the spirit of piety, that it is a matter of the utmost ease for them, for such as you, to enter on the happiness of the religious life. Some little obstruction surmounted, one light spring made, and you regain the walks of Eden! Did you believe it? If you did, what unaccountable caprice, what pure wantonness of perversity, could it be that withheld you? Or, if you were induced to make some short attempt in the way of experiment, did you not wonder how it should happen, by a peculiar untowardness in your case, that these youthful qualities, so congenial with piety, and so easy to be resolved into it, did nevertheless prove obstinately repugnant to the union? Did you not think, Why, then, this aversion to read the Bible, or to retire for serious meditation and devotional exercise, or to any act of duty to be done simply in obedience to God? But, the declamation which you had heard was idle rhetoric or wretched ignorance.

FOSTER.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM ANDERSON, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE ROSE, A.B., Edinburgh.

CHRIST A PHYSICIAN,

A SERMON,

By the Rev. WILLIAM ANDERSON,
Minister of John Street Relief Church.

"*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*—JER. viii. 22.

THE characters are various under which Christ is presented in the Scriptures, for the gladdening of our hearts and the strengthening of our confidence. It is not by one or two representations only that the Lord would remove our fears and establish our trust. He multiplies on us the attributes of the mercy of that Saviour he has given us; so that there is no want or grievance which is not relieved or redressed by his being exhibited in a relation especially adapted to our particular circumstances.

I propose at this time to direct your attention to him under the character of a Physician—not the least interesting, surely, in which he bespeaks us with encouragement. A good physician is one of the best gifts of the providence of God; and I know not another of which there is greater danger that it be idolized; and concerning which greater care should be exercised, that it be enjoyed and confided in, only as subordinate to the Most High.

Spiritually considered, my brethren, it is a diseased world in which we live. We are diseased ourselves, and all around us are diseased. There is nothing we so much need as a physician of ability. I shall, therefore, first of all, give a short account of our naturally plague-smitten condition, that we may be able more sensitively to appreciate the Redeemer when revealed under this character.

Is not sin a disease? a dreadful disease of itself, and productive of a thousand other diseases, ruinous to our happiness? Is not *madness* a disease? Yea, the most frightful of diseases. And is not sin madness? Consistently with truth can we characterize by any milder name that state in which a creature, constituted rational, spends its days in forgetfulness of its Creator; and endeavours to secure happiness for itself independently of Him, and in contempt of Him? Ye that *forget* God, who neither serve Him nor trust in Him, yours is a mortal disease of the soul. Can that heart be sound and healthful in which there is no beating of affection towards the universal Father? And the more ye may be insensible to your diseased condition; and the more that ye may protest that all is well with you, the more do ye give evidence of the extent of the mortification within. But is there any one thus forgetful of the Lord, who can indeed say, that, when he lays his hand on his bosom, he feels all to be right? He may not be able to tell what is precisely

wrong. But that there is something wrong, and mortally wrong, he cannot but be conscious. For so hath the Creator formed the human heart, that separated from himself, there can be no satisfaction; so that a restlessness which nothing created can pacify; a feeling of blankness and void which nothing earthly can fill; a sensation of insecurity, to which nothing human can administer confidence, is at best the afflictive portion of all who do not fear and love Him. And if this be the best, what must be the worst?—When from neglect of God sin has grown into a direct violation of his law; and, when under its influence, a man will blaspheme the name of his Maker, and in gloomy defiance of Him perpetrate all manner of wickedness? Independently of the punishment that shall be awarded such conduct in eternity, is not the sensation itself of enmity against God, with which an impious man feels his heart embittered, enough to demonstrate, that of all diseases sin is the most afflictive? But again, is not madness a disease, and is not sin madness, when it fills a man's bosom with base and ungovernable passions? Is not envy a soreness of the heart? Is not anger a burning of the heart? Is not revenge a torment of the heart, afflicting the miserable patient himself even more heavily than his enemy who is the object of his resentment? And is not lust a torment, too, tossing the sinner to and fro in everlasting restlessness, and ever consuming him with its unhallowed fires? And when sin in its madness has instigated a man to language and actions which provoke his neighbour to retaliate evil on him; or which, as in the case of the drunkard, ruin his character, his fortune, his family, and his health, surely there is enough in all this to demonstrate it a malady of a deplorable complexion.

Yet what is any thing that has hitherto been mentioned compared with what is the full amount of its woe? Oh, is there not in sin's madness the wrath of the Almighty, the frown of his countenance, the smitings of his providence, death here, and the second death hereafter? Nor is even this all. There is not only the sinner's guiltiness in the sight of God, but the sinner's own consciousness of his evil desert; the sense of God's anger deep in his soul; a sight, as it were, of his frowning countenance; a hearing, as it were, of his condemning voice; a feeling, as it were, of his hand having already laid hold on him for punishment. Some see, and hear, and feel all these in this present world, and they can bear witness what anguish of heart it is to be conscious of guilt and to be aware of the Almighty's anger. There are others who do not feel it here, or feel it but slightly; but unless they be cured they are doomed to feel it in eternity; for the heaviest affliction of the reprobate shall be that they know and see that the God of all goodness beholds them with aversion.

Let us reflect then, my hearers, what is our own condition by nature, how leprous are our souls and nigh unto death! and then look abroad on the world. If sin be madness, what a wilderness it is of frenzied men! How violently the fever rages in our own city! If there is a God, and a Judgment, is it not madmen among whom we dwell, and these of the most distempered species; infected with a *moral* lunacy which is perpetuated beyond the grave? My hearers, charge not my representation with extravagance, lest ye yourselves incur the charge of being yet under the delusion of this dreadful disease. The testimony of God against every natural man is, that the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, and that from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in him. Oh, why should men be stricken any more! Why will they revolt more and more! And if this our city of the West afford, as I am inclined to think it does, the healthiest specimen of a religious people to be found in the kingdom; and if this kingdom be religiously the most healthy of all the kingdoms of the world, oh! what a lazar-house of disease this earth must be. We know something of what our city is, how intoxication, and whoredom, and profanation of God's name, and profanation of his day, and fraud, and infidelity prevail; how a multitude, even of our most respectable fellow-citizens, do not even pretend to the character of saints; and how suspicious are the professions of others. My brethren, if such be all the healthiness of the soundest city on the earth, what must be the sickness of the rest? Suppose, that with the exception of the few Christians it contains, all the inhabitants of this world went raging about in the delirium of fever, and covered from head to foot with ulcerous sores, how melancholy were the spectacle! Well, such is the sight which presents itself to the eye of that God who looks on the sin of the soul as man looks on the disease of the flesh. May the Lord increase the

number of them who see sin as he himself sees it: to be of the character of a mortal malady, and who are therefore alarmed on its account, whether for their own sake, or the sake of their friends. My brethren, let us try ourselves by this test—Whether do we more dread that we ourselves or our children be attacked by disease, or be guilty of sin? Let us have no patience with ourselves until we can pray without affectation, Lord, defend us in thy mercy from both; but if at any time it must be a choice of evils for us, send us the disease, and save us from the sin!

Reverting to our representation of the sin-sick condition of the human family, the question which presses itself is, Is there no healing balm? is there no physician for its cure? There is, adored be the divine mercy! The Lord has not doomed us to weep in despair. He has sent forth a Physician into this land of pestilence and death, qualified at all points to heal and restore. The Gospel—the proclamation of good news—reveals Him. His name is Immanuel. Ye diseased and afflicted, doubt not, howsoever violent may be your distemper, that he is adequate to its cure. He is the Son of God, sent of God, qualified of God; therefore mighty to save. Approach him, then, and place yourselves under his care. Nay, cry to him, and he will come to you, "Thou Son of God, have mercy on us." Let this be your cry, and he will presently be by your side with cordials for your fainting hearts, and balm for your festering and mortifying sores. Oh! it is no fancy, no sentimentality, no quackery, multitudes who have tried him, and whom he has cured, can gratefully and exultingly testify. Is not sin a madness indeed; when many, with its consumption in their vitals, and its burning hectic in their cheek, and its palsy in their limbs, and its delirium in their brain, shall mock at the healthy men, healthy in the beauty and vigour of righteousness, whom the Redeemer has restored?

That we may more distinctly perceive the excellence and preciousness of Christ in his character of a physician, let us consider what are the desirable qualifications of a physician of this world, and what are the points in which the best of them prove unsatisfactory.

1st. In order to a physician being a well qualified one, he must be possessed of *skill*, and that for two purposes; first, that he may discern the nature of the patient's disease; and, secondly, that he may know what it is proper to apply for a remedy. For their accomplishment, in both of these respects, we are sometimes called to admire, and be thankful for the medical men of this world. But not seldom do the best of them fail in both respects. By mistaking the nature of the disease, they frequently lose the time during which, humanly speaking, recovery was practicable, or pursue a mode of treatment which even increases the sufferer's malady. At other times, though aware of what is wrong, they stand puzzled and doubtful respecting the proper application; and either do nothing at all, or commence experiments, which precipitate death as often as they effect a recovery.

2d. A physician to be properly qualified must be possessed of *power* and resources. He may know what is his patient's distemper, and he may know what would give him relief, but cannot command the means, or dare not venture on the operation. The instrument or the medicine may be at the time unattainable, or it may be impossible to have the sufferer sent to a warmer clime, &c. How many lives, humanly speaking again, would some physicians save or prolong, could their word summon to their aid what their skill discerns would be effectual!

3d. A physician may be skilful, and the means of cure may be within his reach; but he may fail through want of the requisite *morality*, through negligence and a deficiency of sympathy. There is much more than intellectual accomplishment, and respect to selfish interests and professional enthusiasm, necessary for constituting a good physician. He must have the qualification of a benevolent heart, which feels his patient's pain as if it were his own; which looks at the wo-stricken countenance of a wife, and resolves that if possible she shall be saved the desolateness of widowhood; which looks on weeping children, and resolves that no energy shall be spared in saving them from the orphan's destitution; which looks on a father's and a mother's anguish, and resolves that, God assisting him, he shall save their child. Without this enthusiasm of benevolence there are the temptations of love of ease, and love of study, and love of pleasure, which will induce a physician to grudge exertions, which will confine him to his books, or detain him in his bed, or in the

feasting chamber, when he should be watching by the couch of sickness. And, oh! if the Faculty and all their licentiates were before me, I would tell them, what it is pitiful so many of them need to be told, though there are a few happy exceptions, who are already aware of their duty, that it is essential to the character of a well accomplished physician, that he be concerned about the *soul* of his patient, and of the interests of the *church;* so that he shall reason of the sinner, "*There* is a man who, if he die at present, he shall perish eternally; I shall exert myself for his cure, that he may have time to repent;" or, "*There* is a man who, were he to die, the Redeemer's cause would sustain a great loss by the event; I shall exert myself, that he may be preserved for its support and advancement;" or, again, "*There* is a child of promising parts; his parents designed him for the ministry of the Gospel; in saving him, I may be the means of saving thousands for eternity." Besides all this, Is it not probable that a holy providence will honour the medical care of a pious man above the manner in which it will countenance the care of a reprobate? How zealous, then, my hearers, does it not become us to be, in rebuking the vulgar and profane opinion that the faith of the Christian is a matter of inferior moment as an accomplishment of a physician?

4th. There are diseases, to attempt the cure of which were presumptuous in the physicians of this world. All they may attempt is to smooth the path to the grave. Nor can any of them arrest the descent of old age into that gloomy mansion. Alas! for these physicians of the world How death mocks them! They cannot save themselves.

5th. Whatever they may do for the body, none of them can cure the soul. They can do little for its welfare for eternity. All they can do here is to recommend their patients to the care of another.

From the tenor of these remarks, you will perceive, my brethren, that it is my intention rather to contrast than compare the physician-qualifications of Christ with any thing that can be discovered on this earth. It were a wretched case for us all, could nothing more be said of Him than that he is merely *superior* to the most eminent of their profession.

Remark then, generally, that it is through the medium of his manhood or humanity that Christ acts a physician's part to his people. As it was through man that death came, even so through man comes the resurrection. But, mark, through what kind of manhood?—one so exalted and ennobled by union with the divine nature of the only-begotten Son of God; that every thing he did is of infinite value; and, moreover, one on which, because of this union, the eternal Father delighted, and continues to delight to pour out the influences of his Spirit for its qualification and endowment, without measure or restriction. Having made this explanation,

Observe, in the first place, the *skill* of our heavenly physician. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse," sung Isaiah, "and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge." Such was the language of prediction concerning him. And his own claim when he appeared was, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him." Accordingly, let his sayings and discourses be pondered, and learn how well he understands our disease, and "needs not that any man should testify to him; for he knows what is in man." The *skill* of our Physician, then, will not admit of being doubted.

In the second place, with respect to his *power*, hearken again to the words of prophecy concerning him: "I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people; for a light of the Gentiles: to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." In harmony with which is the record of history, that he gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, bread to the hungry, health to the sick, and life to the dead. Especially, however, do I here summon your attention to his course of suffering obedience on earth; to his indigence and poverty; to the scorn and abuse to which he exposed himself; to his agony in the garden: to

his torture on the cross ; to his habitation of the grave. Some one may ask, What connexion have all these things with our Physician's power? I answer: they were the purchase-price of the balm of our healing—the suffering and sacrifice of that Lamb, in whose death we find the expiation of our guilt. Behold him, therefore, again, raised from the dead, and entered into the heavenly sanctuary, as the High Priest of our profession, to plead with the divine Justice, on the foundation of his all-sufficient sacrificial work, in behalf of all who in faith cast themselves on his care. Yea, a third time, behold him, in reward of his obedience, exalted above every name of power; that at the mention of him every knee should bow, and tongue confess that he is Lord. Brethren, when we have a King for our Physician, and one of the Almighty's anointing, how criminal it were to distrust his power!

Thirdly; How much more criminal it is, if possible, to distrust his *benevolence!* Not only is he our kinsman, having taken our nature upon him, so as to sympathize with us in our afflictions ; not only has he invited us all to come unto him to be cured, so that for any one to doubt of his willingness, is to impute insincerity to him ; but the very object for which he humbled himself and died was, that he might have the satisfaction and glory of saving men ; so that to imagine of the Redeemer that he is cold-hearted towards any one of the human race, appears to me to represent him as being capricious in his affection, yea, as denying himself, and as being unconcerned about his own glory and the reward of his pains. Brethren, so far as we ourselves are concerned, let us take comfort in the Son of God, although it were on no other principle than that to remain comfortless, amid the exhibitions of his mercy, is to increase our guilt by insulting him; and, so far as others are concerned, let us, as members of that church to which he has committed the trust of proclaiming abroad his love, beware of supposing that there is any one human being about whom he is careless, and that we need not trouble ourselves, or put ourselves to expense, in having the glad tidings concerning him *universally* disseminated. When, without exception, the Spirit in the word says "Come," let the Bride also say, "Come and take of the water of life freely."

Fourthly; Our heavenly physician cures the *soul*, a department of medical practice, we have seen, in which the physicians of this world have no part. Brethren, there are three respects in which Christ cures the soul. He cures it of ignorance, of guilt, and depravity. It is to be feared, that some endeavour to have the cure of his blood, in the second of these respects, when they put no value on the cure of his Spirit, in the last respect. Let them not be deceived. Christ will not be divided, or dealt with partially. To no man will he act a physician's part, who does not call Him in to cure him of the whole of his spiritual distempers. Be it ours to rejoice in all his recovery, but especially in his bringing us to a *right mind*—in making us devout, and prayerful, and resigned, and hopeful in God; and meek, and affectionate, and forgiving, and charitable, and pure and useful. Such is the great salvation of God; he hath "saved us," saith the Apostle, "by the *washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Fifthly; Though it be the healing of the soul in which our heavenly physician's skill, power, and benevolence are especially displayed, his attention is not limited to it. Not only does he excel the physicians of this world, in that he administers to the recovery of that better part of our constitution, for which they have no relief, but he excels them in their own department. When any of them is at any time successful in relieving the body, is it not only as Christ, the superior physician, qualifies and employs him? But, especially, I refer you to the time when his healing voice shall speak his dead saints into life, or shall transform those who may remain alive until his coming, and beautify them with that spirituality of immortal body—a fit tabernacle for the immortal spirit—shining in which they shall be conformed to himself. Brethren, is the Resurrection or Transformation an object of your hope? I suspect, yea, I am sure, that this part of our physician's work is very sinfully undervalued by a great part of his church.

Finally ; As a physician Christ shall cure the abode of man. He shall restore the earth. The Scripture says it. The serpent has poisoned even the inert globe. "Cursed is the ground" on account of that sin which he introduced. The poison has penetrated deep, deep as the seat of the earthquake and volcano ; and it has risen

to poison our atmosphere. But he who has been manifested to destroy the works of the devil, shall make no partial work of it in removing the curse. He shall meet the destroyer in every sphere of his mischief. He shall purge out all the poison, and make them "new heavens and a new earth." The prophets and apostles expected this; and the primitive church expected it; and the Nicene Council expected it; and the English reformers expected it; and Mede expected it; and the majority of the Westminster divines expected it, (see their Annotations); and Milton expected it; and Matthew Henry expected it; and Cowper expected it; and Robert Hall expected it; and what man who has pondered the subject does not expect it? Brethren, it is quite true that it is a matter of subordinate importance; but error in a matter of subordinate importance will induce error on those which are of greater moment.

To Him, through whose physician-power, the saints "shall reign on the earth," Rev. v. 10, be given all dominion and ascribed all praise. Amen.

ON SALVATION THROUGH FAITH, BY GRACE, AND NOT OF WORKS;

A SERMON PREACHED ON 19TH JULY, 1835, SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY,

By the Rev. GEORGE ROSE, A.B.,

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"*For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*"—EPH. ii. 8, 9.

THE salvation of his own immortal soul, or its exaltation to a state of endless happiness before the throne of God, is, without any exception, the most solemn and most interesting object which a rational being can desire to obtain. In its *elevation*, it infinitely towers beyond the height of any attainment of merely human ambition; in its *value*, it unspeakably surpasses any treasure either of rarity or of splendour which can be discovered upon earth; in its *purity* and *scope of enjoyment*, it inconceivably exceeds the sensual, transient pleasures of time; for it is the delight of the holy angels, and boundless as the expanse of heaven; in its *glory*, it is immeasurably higher in honour and renown than the opulence, titles, or dignity of this planet of creation; for it is an entrance to the most holy, but blissful presence of the almighty Creator; in its *fulness*, it is perfect; and in its *duration* eternal. And how do we ascertain that such will hereafter be the destiny of the invisible spirit within us, when it shall again become united to the reanimated and glorified framework in which it is now embodied? Not from the mere wish or hope to be raised to those regions of felicity; not from a mere longing after immortality—for there is a possibility that such feelings might find a place in the heart of man, and yet at death such bright and visionary prospects might end in darkness and vanity; not from the researches of merely human philosophy, for since "no man hath seen God at any time," the most remarkable analogies, and striking and ingenious modes of reasoning cannot go farther than a theory or conjecture concerning the solemn realities of the world to come. But Almighty God, our heavenly Father, hath too compassionate a love for the children of his own merciful creation, though so fallen and polluted by sin, to permit us to continue in ignorance, and consequently in a state of uncertainty, unhappiness, and despondency, concerning "those things which shall be hereafter." And to every man who simply takes up the Bible, with a thorough conviction in his own mind that it is indeed and in truth the holy Word of God, containing an inspired revelation of his divine will, and of his plans of benevolent goodness towards us, has the Lord clearly made known, in characters too luminously conspicuous ever to be misunderstood or mistaken, what will be the final, eternal, and most blessed state of every faithful believer. In the language of sacred Scripture itself, you will find it represented

exactly as it has just been described. The Lord Jesus Christ declared, "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Again, (Luke xiii. 29,) "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." On another occasion he said, in setting forth the excellency of the Gospel, because through a saving knowledge of and belief in it alone are we led through him to this state of everlasting salvation, (Matt. xiii. 44,) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto *treasure* hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth *all that he hath*, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly *pearls:* who, when he had found *one pearl of great price*, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." St. Paul says, (Heb. xii. 22,) "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels;" and for his Ephesian converts (i. 17,) he prayed "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The Psalmist calls it a "fulness of joy;" and our Saviour solemnly declared, (John vi. 47,) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Such being the meaning and capaciousness of the term, salvation, our next inquiry ought to be, How is so glorious and desirable an end to be gained? How is any man to apply these invaluable truths personally to himself, so that he can engage his whole soul in the delightful anticipation and reasonable hope of obtaining them while here on earth, and be assured of arriving at the entire and perfect fruition of them in the realms of joy? To these inquiries, our text presents us with a distinct and satisfactory answer: "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

We might well be alarmed for the safety of our souls, were it made to rest on any other foundation than that which is here laid down in the Word of God; for surely nothing can be more secure than that which is based in an unchangeable attribute of the Godhead, his free sovereign unmerited favour, flowing from his own infinite love. Were it primarily, and at its very origin, made to depend upon any *feelings*, any *words*, any *actions* of ourselves or our fellow-mortals, each of whom is as guilty in the sight of God as ourselves, who does not perceive that doubts and fears would prevail with regard to our ultimate acceptance with the Almighty by reason of some omission, imperfection, or positive violation of his divine commandments, which would prevent our entrance into glory, as at the fall it caused a separation from his presence. Whereas there cannot be a stronger inducement with every thoughtful man who feels himself to be a sinner, and yet is anxious now to make his peace with God, than the knowledge that God perfectly forgives and pardons sin for the sake of Jesus, that he has, as it were, been the first to come forward with terms of reconciliation, and that he confers salvation on the fallen sons of Adam, not because they deserve it, but of his own grace; and because there is an all-sufficient remedy in the cross of Christ, for the entire remission of sin, its expulsion from the heart of the offender, and for his effectual and most happy conversion to his God in peace. The proclamation of redeeming mercy hath been heralded forth from the throne of Him who ruleth over all, by angels, by prophets, by apostles, and evangelists, and martyrs, and, above all, by the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God himself. So that on the part of almighty God, nothing is wanting to render plain, and easily to be understood by the inhabitants of a ruined world, that momentous truth, "by grace are ye saved." Yet something no less important to be pointed out is immediately added "through *faith*." Now, this is not an act of God, but that of man. It is an assent of the mind to the certainty of God's revealed announcements, and an acquiescence in the scheme of salvation thus brought to light, as being replete with infinite goodness, wisdom and love. "All men have not faith;" consequently all do not discern and value this scheme of gratuitous salvation as we ought. An unregenerate character, full of its own natural pride, and enmity, and self righteousness, is averse to admit the humiliating necessity of thus returning to God; and ignorant *alike* of the holiness;

power, and glory of that most awful Being against whom he is daily and hourly offending, and of the depravity of his own heart, and the utterly undone condition of his soul without Christ, he either neglects religion altogether, or, like the Jews of old, "goes about to establish a righteousness of his own;" as if any pitiful and scanty fragments of good works, or occasional pious feelings and resolutions of amendment, could ever stand the fiery ordeal of the last great day, when the secrets of all hearts, the motives of all actions, and the obedience of all attempts to keep the *perfect* law, shall be laid open in the sight of God, of angels, and of men. Contrast this with the frame of mind and corresponding consistency of conduct of the sincere believer, the man that *has* a strong, lively, influential *faith*. By solemn meditation and prayer, by diligent searching of the Scriptures, and calm dispassionate reasoning on heavenly truth, under the teaching of the Spirit, he has gained such a knowledge of the *real* character and attributes of his Maker, of the nature and spirituality of his divine precepts, and such humbling views of his own inability to fulfil all the obligations which God can most righteously demand of him, that he is emptied of every vain feeling of dependence upon himself, and is willing, with a cheerful resignation and accordance with the designs of infinite wisdom, to throw himself entirely and unreservedly on the free mercy of his God. He sensitively feels and acknowledges that he cannot entertain *one single good thought in his mind;* but it is the grace of God in Christ which implanted it there, that not a single aspiration towards heaven can breathe forth from his *heart;* but it was some sudden discovery of the amazing love of God to him, in the first instance, which caused it to be awakened within him, that he cannot utter with his *lips* a single prayer, or the language of edifying and instructive christian exhortation to a fellow-sinner, but it is God's good Spirit that blesses him with that glow of devotion, or endues him with courage boldly to speak of Christ, or maintain his cause against the virulence of an ungodly world; and that he cannot perform a single *good deed,* but the kind providence of God first places him in a situation where he has the favourable opportunity, then moves his heart so as to avail himself of it; and, lastly, promises to reward it for the sake of his ever blessed Son as though it had originated in his own inherent righteousness, which the believer *knows* and *confesses* that it did not. Hence faith is that heavenly disposition of the mind which leads us to look up to almighty God for every thing, and to rest in ourselves for nothing—an attitude most becoming the *creature* when viewed in relationship to his great *Creator*—a *child* in the sight of One infinitely mightier and more full of love and compassion than an earthly *parent*—a *subject* in respect to a *Sovereign* inconceivably more powerful and glorious than the most illustrious potentate on earth, and a *disciple* in relation not to a worldly *master*, but to the Lord divine in heaven.

Faith leads us to trust in all the blessed promises of God, simply on the declaration of them in the Bible, because his Word is truth, without doubt, cavil, or a desire to evade or explain away their obvious meaning. Hence the Apostle concisely, but with most comprehensive accuracy, describes it to be "the *substance* of things hoped for; the *evidence* of things not seen." "The King eternal, immortal, and invisible; the only wise God;" the throne whereon he sits in glory ineffable; the heavenly Mediator and holy Comforter; the angels and animated beings which stand in his most awful presence; and the spirits of just men made perfect,—all these are to us beings "not seen," and will remain so while we continue in the flesh; but the pious converted Christian firmly believes in them all on the *evidence* of the word of God, and the testimony of the spirit, "bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God," convinced of their solemn and awakening reality, they are to him the *substance* of things hoped for, "and through this faith" which expands his soul, purifies his heart, sanctifies his character, makes him walk on earth like one who ere long is to enter on eternity, in the presence of God, and the Lamb, and the blissful society of the redeemed. Our text explicitly affirms that he is "saved." In like manner there are other things set forth in language as distinct and intelligible, "which are not seen" by the inhabitants of earth; and may God Almighty, of his infinite mercy, ordain that they *never may* be seen by *any one* of us here present, or by any in whose welfare and eternal happiness we are nearly and dearly interested. There is the abode of Satan and his angels, to which all who in this world espouse his cause, God has

awfully declared by the mouth of his prophets, and of his Son, whom he hath appointed judge at the last day,—will, in his most holy and righteous justice, be hereafter condemned, unless they now repent, and take refuge at the foot of the cross of *Christ*, the Saviour, who came to redeem *all* who believe in, love, and obey him, from that state of torment for ever. Himself forewarns us that it is one "of outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" *thrice* did he say, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," and to his beloved disciple, after his own ascension into heaven, when he disclosed to him those wonderful visions contained in the book of Revelation xxi. 7, 8, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Now, what effect does the reflective study of such an awakening passage as this produce not upon the fearful and unbelieving," but upon one who fears God in his threatenings, as well as loves him in his mercies, and is a true believer in Jesus? Alarming as such an intimation is, he receives it as divine, he embraces it with faith, and that faith becomes to him "the substance of things" to be dreaded, and feared, and escaped, and prayed against, and is to him, equally with God's promises and descriptions of future happiness, "the evidence of things *not seen*," and which he most earnestly implores Almighty God that he never may see. Thus while "*fools* make a mock at sin," and ridicule the observance of God's commandments, and a life of holy walking with him, and disbelieve these "terrors of the Lord," as things that will never come to pass; the *wise* and humble minded, but most anxious Christian, prays for grace to be delivered from being any one of those characters, against which he sees with the eye of faith that the indignation of incensed Deity is righteously aroused; he discerns that he could not be regarded as a holy, pure, just, and all glorious Spirit, were he not thus to show his hatred of sin, by its punishment in those who will not renounce its pollutions, and return to his allegiance and paternal love through the blood of a crucified Redeemer. He is persuaded "to flee from the wrath to come," and persevering in a course of Christian rectitude to the end of his days, he is enabled, with divine support and comfort, *at his last hour*, to rest on this promise of his Saviour in the same sacred book of Revelations ii. 11. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. He that overcometh shall *not be hurt* of the *second death*." Mark, I beseech you, how when a man diligently searches his bible, with an inquiring mind, with deep, sincere, persevering prayer, and receives the word of divine truth into "an honest and good heart," how the goodness of our heavenly Father causes even the threatenings, and the most perplexing and terrific announcements to be instrumental in working out his everlasting salvation. So that with regard to both the promises and the denunciations; the hopes and the fears; the Christian graces and the worldly vices; the descriptions of heaven and the accounts of hell, it is equally true in the case of believers that "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." What, then, if after a serious inquiry into the spiritual state of your own heart, you shall discover that *you have not faith?* The language of the Apostle implies that such is the condition of every man who is yet in an unregenerate state. It is one of those things which by nature we do not possess.

But are we, therefore, to despond, and give up ourselves for lost? By no means; take encouragement from this simple fact, "*it is the gift of God*." If so, *go to* him, ask him in prayer for it, and he will give it to you, *if* you sincerely seek for it in his Son's name. Yea, Christ himself will bountcously bestow it upon you. For you remember that a personal application was once made to him by his own disciples, "Lord, *increase* our faith," and the Apostle assures us that he who hath power to increase is the same divine Being who originally implants that feeling of a firm unshaken confidence in God in the human heart. Heb. xii. 2, "Looking unto *Jesus*, the *author* and finisher of our faith;" and he confers it by the silent imperceptible operation of the *Holy Ghost*. For it is enumerated by the same inspired writer, among "the fruits of the *spirit*." It must be sought for, and joyfully accepted as the free gift of God, for our text immediately adds, "not of works, lest any man should boast." How clearly, then, because with the pen of divine inspiration, does the Apostle point out to us the indispensable necessity of

faith, its position as *antecedent* to any works which God will condescend to regard and reward as good, and the consequence flowing from this order of things, the glory of God the Creator, and the proper feeling of humility, and total absence of all boasting, which becomes one, *once a sinner*, but now converted to righteousness, but still, in his very best estate, a ransomed and rescued *creature*. Are works then of no avail? Are they to be neglected, thrown aside, or cease to be performed? Shall we be saved by a bare, abstract, assenting faith, while our works are evil, and at variance with the precepts, the principles, and the very end of the Gospel? A more fearful delusion than this, and one more fatal to the soul, could not take possession of the mind of man. St. James ii. 17, testifies distinctly, "Even so *faith* if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works, show me thy faith *without* works, and I will show thee my faith *by* my works," and this most beautifully harmonizes with the assertion of St. Paul, in the words just after our text, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This proves that our ability to do good works is as much the gift of God as faith is; *consequently*, that every ground and reason for boasting of them either in the sight of God, or in the sight of men, is as completely swept away in the one case as in the other. The question, "What hast thou which thou didst not receive?" applies with equal power to *both*; and leaves nothing to the faithful and pains-taking believer, save a heart full of gratitude to his most merciful and benevolent God, for *permitting* him to live devotedly to his service and glory. And here let me point most strikingly out to your observation, and entreat you to bear it continually in your remembrance, and make it the guide of your daily conduct, that this passage luminously reveals the important fact, that *all* who *are ordained to eternal life*, are *ordained* also to *a diligent use* of *all those means of grace* which Almighty God has appointed to prepare them for it, and to those *good works* which are the only legitimate and undeniable testimony and fruits of that faith through which, by the grace of God, they are saved. If a man entertains the thought and conviction that he is destined hereafter to inherit a crown of glory, while he is *shunning* every service of his God, and neglecting every divinely-instituted means of sanctification and holding communion with heaven, or is going on in a course either of avowed and infidel profligacy, or of private sin, such a one *must* be deceiving his own soul; he is anticipating a state of moral purity and holiness, as well as happiness, of which habitual sin is actually disqualifying him for the enjoyment; he is calculating on an *end*, but overlooking the *means*, and he is cherishing a hope which, unless he repent, and take Christ for its foundation, and a life of obedient righteousness as its concomitant, will be found worse than visionary, inasmuch as a *now unbelieved in*, but most direful punishment will be *added* to *his despair*. This ought with every man to be a very solemn consideration; yet it is most true. For it is not a mere inference, deducible from the sacred words before us, but is minutely followed out by the very same Apostle in his Epistle to Titus, when treating *on the identical subject* of *our text*, and he vehemently urges it upon him as being a doctrine of such vital importance, that he (and, therefore, every faithful minister throughout the Church of Christ,) is bound in virtue of his consecrated office, *fearlessly* and *undisguisedly* to lay it before his people, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear." Titus ii. 11—15, "For the *grace* of God that *bringeth salvation* hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, *denying* ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, *righteously* and *godly* in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous* of *good works*. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." Yet the scriptural estimate of these before God is explicit and uniform throughout; for while the justification of Abraham, recorded in Genesis, was of *faith* and not of works, we find the doctrine set forth precisely in the same manner in the book of Revelation xiv. 13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their *works do follow them*." They will be appealed to at the great day of judgment, "when men shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad," as the fruits of faith, the only

legitimate and admitted evidence of a true and lively faith in Jesus, and the just and satisfactory reason why they should obtain a crown of life in the sight of God, of the whole hierarchy of heaven, and of *their fellow-men*, but they will not be regarded as being meritorious in themselves; for when the saints on high are represented as ascribing *praise* for *their* redemption, *no mention* whatever is made *of their own good deeds*, but all the grace, and merit, and righteousness, and glory of the final triumphant victory over Satan, death, and the grave are ascribed to the Almighty Jehovah, and his only begotten Son. "After this I beheld," saith the highly favoured evangelist and seer of these visions of celestial glory, "and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, *salvation* to *our God* which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Is not that state of blessedness, and peace, and unfading joy, worthy of every passion and energy of our whole soul? Ephes. ii. 4, 5, "May God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, raise *all* of *us* up together, and make us to sit together in those heavenly places in Christ Jesus." By grace may we be saved through faith, and meekly remember "that it is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works," therefore let us never boast; let us seek to be "made his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which may God ordain that we should so walk in them, with holy obedience and fear while we are upon earth, as that in the end we may be welcomed to the happiness of heaven, before the throne of God, the Father, the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

ON THE ANGELS.

That there exist in the universe spirits of an higher order than the souls of men, may be inferred in some degree from the dictates of reason. So far as we are able to trace the works of God, we remark in them a gradation leading up from the lowest order to man. The mineral by slow degrees approaches to the plant. The plant, by shades still more imperceptible, touches the confines of animal life. The animals in many a various degree possess the faculties of strength, activity, and intellect;—until, at last, we arrive at man, in whom shine still the traces of his Maker's image. But alas! how faint are those traces become; how infinite the distance which divides him now from the Creator! How shall his limited understanding be compared with unbounded wisdom! How shall his weak and tottering virtue be compared with that purity which is spotless and unchangeable!

When we look, therefore, on the one hand, to the narrow bound which separates man from the other works of God—inhabitants like himself of this world;—and on the other, to the awful chasm that presents itself between him and the great Creator: the analogy of providence leads us to suppose that in this interval beings will be found, of intelligence and endowments more valuable far than ours, though removed still at a distance which created beings cannot pass, from the glory of the eternal God.

It is but a little part of His works that we behold; yet even our imperfect information ascertains that the world which we inhabit is only one among ten thousand—superior in extent and splendour—rolling over our heads in silent majesty—shining by no borrowed light, but themselves the suns which illuminate systems like ours. It cannot be, that these are without inhabitants—that, in scenes so admirably calculated to display the Creator's glory, there should be no witnesses of its magnificence. In orbs more favoured than ours—orbs from which beams the light returned by ours with borrowed lustre—shall not intelligent beings dwell, worthy of their radiant habitation! Much more in that heaven of heavens—of which human imagination can but faintly conceive the nature, though it firmly believes the existence—shall there not be inmates, more fitted than we are to appear in the immediate presence of God?

Such are the conjectures of reason on a subject placed in its very nature beyond the limited powers of man. Where unassisted reason fails, revelation lends its aid. But the degree of light which revelation bestows is in every case dictated by the usefulness of the subject. Those precepts which are to guide our life—and those sanctions which impress the obligations of the divine law, are detailed with clearness. Doctrines which concern only the "deep things of God"—things remote from our

duties and interests, remain mysterious and dimly seen, until that day, when, our situation changing, and our powers of perception perhaps altering along with it, we shall be strengthened "to know even as also we are known."

In regard to those blessed spirits who surround the throne of God, there are many questions which human curiosity might prompt, to which revelation gives but an imperfect reply; because He who bestoweth revelation upon man saw that no further knowledge was necessary for us. The subject is revealed, so far as the knowledge of it is calculated for our improvement. Let not us seek to be wise above what is written.

The *number* of those blessed spirits who surround the throne, Scripture represents as great beyond the power of man to reckon. They are declared, by the Apostle to the Hebrews, to be an "innumerable company."

Of the *endowments* which the angels possess, the conception which we are left to form is not precisely defined. We know that they have nothing which they have not received; but in what precise degree of profusion the bounty of God is poured upon them, He hath not seen it necessary that we should be informed. This far we know, that they are superior to us in every estimable attainment.

It is indeed impossible for us to conceive of these blessed spirits otherwise than as far exalted above us. They stand continually in the revealed presence of God. They behold the brightness of His countenance unveiled. It is impossible that their understandings should not be expanded far beyond the standard of ours. It is impossible that their virtues should not shine with a brightness which ours cannot attain while we tabernacle on the earth. For to them opportunities of knowledge far higher than ours are given. They, by a measure of inspiration which we cannot receive, are enabled to see the beauty and feel the value of perfection.

In the possession of those endowments which adorn the angelic nature, there seem to be varieties among them of rank and excellence. We read of "angels and archangels;" of "cherubim and seraphim;" of "thrones and dominions, principalities and powers." What these several names are intended to denote, we cannot exactly know; but they sufficiently convey to us the idea, that, in the heavenly world as well as in this dwelling of ours, the Almighty sees it most conducive to His own glory, and to the happiness of His creatures, that there should be a certain subordination among them; that there should be an inequality in the distribution which he is pleased to make among them of His favours.

As to the *employments* which the blessed angels exercise, the same regard to our improvement regulates the degree of information which is given. Those parts only of their task are revealed to us in which we have a personal interest, from the contemplation of which we may receive instruction or comfort. They are represented to us in Scripture as employed in praising and in serving their God.

They praise Him; standing around the throne of His glory, and offering unto Him those rapturous hymns of joy which His presence and His perfections inspire.

They serve the Master whom they adore. They are "ministers of His that do His pleasure." Above all, they are the instruments through which he executes the purposes of His providence towards the children of men.

They were the instruments through whom, the Old Testament record assures us, God made known to the patriarchs the purposes of His will. Through them, the Mosaic dispensation is expressly said to have been given. They welcomed the first dawn of Gospel day, "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men." To the first preachers of the Gospel their active protection was given.

They are not only ministers of good to the righteous, but ministers of vengeance to the transgressor. "Cherubim" kept the way of the tree of life, against the first parents of our race, when their guilt excluded them from the delights of Eden.

They delight in mercy. They shouted for joy when creation first arose. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Delightful and endearing that joy will be, if through their ministry he have been awakened to newness of life! They are present with the spirits of the good, rejoicing to fill them with pious thoughts; and to nourish the tender blossom of righteousness, as it begins to blow. They rejoice in executing the purposes of divine goodness towards the faithful, while he tabernacles in this distant land; and, when his trial is closed, they bear his soul to the place of its rest.

BRUNTON

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN FORBES, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. DUNCAN M'CALLUM, Arisaig.

THE SIN OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOHN FORBES,

Minister of the Outer High Church, Glasgow

"*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*"—PROV. xii. 10

THERE are certain prejudiees against the subject which I have been called to address you upon this evening, which it will be proper to attend to before entering upon the more immediate consideration of the sin, which is to form the leading topic of discourse. For when the mind is pre-occupied with prejudices, it not only refuses to admit truth, but regards it with improper feeling; and the means employed to convince and persuade, instead of having that effect, are either resisted as unnecessary, or despised as ridieulous.

The prejudice that I would notice first is, that this is a trifling subject, which is unworthy of being made a matter of grave and deliberate considcration. Now, we grant that there are subjects of higher moment, and duties of more vital and general concern. Every man has not to do with the inferior animals; and with regard to those who have, they have various other important matters to attend to besides this. They have their duty to God, and their duty to their families, and their duty to their fellow creatures in all its several branches, to consider and to discharge. But if the prcsent subject constitute a matter of moral and religious obligation at all, it is not to be thrust out of view, because it is not of the most universal and commanding importance. It is for the reason that it is liable to be lost sight of, in the enforeement of other more important subjects, that the present Annual Sermon has been instituted. And, certainly, whilst the subjeet is not to be put on a level with several others, it is not without its claims to a very particular portion of our regard. It relates to the happiness, the safety, and the wellbeing of a very extensive portion of the works of God, to manifold tribes and classes of living creatures, some of whieh are peculiarly serviceable to us. It belongs to the great duty of *mercy*, that important portion of the divine law, which is so lovely and excellent. And, in fine, it is a subjeet which pertains to the *exercise of dominion*, one of the high and peculiar distinctions belonging to human nature, and which exalts us above the creatures of which we speak, so that we address you at this time in your high and responsible capacity of God's vieegerents upon earth, requiring and beseeching you to exercise a mild and clement sovereignty over the numerous and

interesting *subjects* that have been put under your protection and government.

Another prejudice which requires our notice is, that the outcry against cruelty to animals is a mere piece of sentimentalism, or affectation, and that what is so called is little if at all felt by the creatures that are pitied. Now here we must distinguish. Perhaps there is a tendency, in some cases, to make more of animals than is right, by raising them into pets and favourites; and also to transfer to them feelings which more properly belong to the person himself than to the creatures for which he feels. But we must not think that the lower animals are altogether destitute of feeling, or that they cannot be injured, or that they do not suffer many and very severe wrongs at the hand of unprincipled oppressors and tormentors. With regard to most of the animal creation, we would just ask you to consider the delicacy of their structure, the fineness of their parts, the number and acuteness of their senses, and the sensibility of their various organs. Many of them exceed ourselves in their susceptibility of impressions, having acuter powers of hearing, a more enlarged and distinct vision, and a keener smell. Now, they may also exceed us in their susceptibility of pleasure and pain, and be capable of feeling more exquisitely corporeal suffering. And that they are much harassed and pained in their domesticated state is manifest with regard to many classes. Their peculiar properties are disciplined and broken in by much suffering to the creature unto the use of man. But in such cases it may, perhaps, be said, that if pains are endured, corresponding advantages are acquired. That if the creature loses its liberty, it gets more abundant and better food; and that if it is disciplined and laboured, it is also sheltered and protected from all its natural enemies among the other animals. Be it so; it is, nevertheless, true that there is a difference between a tyrannic exercise of power, and a mild and gracious management of the lower creatures. What shall we say of acts of gratuitous cruelty, of unmitigated tyranny, and of unrighteous injury. The man, if he may be so called, who is guilty of such deeds, who capriciously abuses his power to injure one of the inferior animals, is a disgrace to his species, a tyrant of a more ignoble, but not less hateful kind than he who makes use of the privilege of a throne to molest his fellow-men. He sports with suffering, which is always sacred to the good; he oppresses the defenceless, a cowardly action; and he gratifies his malignity, a fiendish principle of joy.

A third prejudice to which we would advert is, that this subject cannot be treated from the pulpit with the hope of much good. Upon what ground is this alleged? Is it that the statement of truth from the pulpit is calculated to be less efficacious than the statement of it in any other way. If so, then this consideration would equally discourage the inculcation of any doctrine or of any duty from the pulpit. But preaching is an institution of divine appointment, and is connected with the promise of a peculiar blessing, which has been greatly realized, in the benefits that have already flowed from the office of the ministry to mankind. The benevolent spirit which distinguishes the Gospel, and which its ministers are appointed particularly to inculcate, has done more to civilize the world, and to foster every benign and gracious disposition in the bosom of mankind, than all other means put together. It is this which has taken from war much of its barbarity, which has reduced and almost abolished slavery, which has covered every Christian kingdom with infirmaries for the sick, hospitals for the indigent, and all the other innumerable institutions of civilized society. And it is a part of the same benevolent work to turn the kindly feelings of humanity towards the brute creation, and thereby to rescue them from the tormenting cruelty which would embitter their existence and sport with their lives.

We shall now then humbly attempt to do something towards this end, and with this view we shall proceed to state some arguments to enforce the duty of abstaining from the cruel treatment of the inferior animals. And first, kindness to the brute creation is a command of God. Several precepts of this kind are particularly worthy of notice. "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." Deut. xxv. 4, 1 Cor. ix. 9. "If thou seest the ass or him that *hateth thee* lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help him." Ex. xxiii. 5. "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way on any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones

or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young or the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." Deut. xxii. 6.

The object of these precepts is to teach humanity towards the inferior creatures; and if this spirit was recognised under the law, it must surely be much more in accordance with the gospel, which is so particularly a system of love and mercy. If you will think upon these precepts, you will find that each contains a distinct and important principle, and that they may be drawn out into the following rules, which declare to us the will of God for the treatment of his irrational creatures. 1st. "That *labouring* animals are to be well fed and cared for, in return for their toil and work." 2d. "That every animal that is in a situation of oppression, peril, or insuperable difficulty, is to be relieved, assisted, and delivered; and that without any regard to whom it may belong, though to your worst enemy." 3d. "That no animal is to be tormented merely for our pleasure, or have its rational instincts thwarted, or its accustomed and long acquired habits denied." This is the object of the third precept, where the eggs or the young of a bird might be taken, but the dam was to be left at large to continue her wonted habits as a free denizen of the air and fields; and not to be subjected to unaccustomed restraint and confinement, by being taken and cooped up in a cage.

Now, every one who is not utterly hardened in his feelings and perverted in his judgment, must surely admit the equity and justice of each of these rules. What can be more reasonable than the first, that the hard wrought animal should share with its master in the fruits of their common toil; and this whether it is employed in the labours of husbandry or in any other operation. The principle holds alike, whatever be the animal's employment, whether in bearing burdens or in conveying goods; it has a right to be sustained out of the fruits of its toil, and to receive an adequate sustenance.

The same reasonableness belongs to the second rule, and in its full application. Whilst it requires us to relieve and deliver an oppressed or endangered animal, it obviously implies the prohibition, that we are not ourselves willingly to place an animal in such a situation, or be the means of overburdening, maltreating, or in any wise oppressing it or endangering its life. The natural principle of sympathy confirms the authority of this command, and shows its equity to every feeling mind. What is the first and natural impulse that you feel on seeing a poor animal in any way oppressed or endangered? Is it not to give assistance? If a stable were on fire, would you not put forth every effort to get at the poor animals that were bound up and set them loose, that they might escape the fury of the destroying element; and this from a principle of benevolence, without any regard whatever to profit. And would you not esteem that man to be destitute of every feeling of humanity who could calculate the mere value of the horses or cattle, without having a concern for their escape from a cruel death.

The third rule is equally equitable and right with the preceding. It is that you are not to torment animals in any way merely for your own gratification or amusement; or by confining those that are accustomed to freedom, or in any other way checking their habits and defeating their instincts. The only exception to this rule is, the confinement of dangerous beasts, such as dogs or bulls, that are disposed to attack passengers and take away their lives, or even the killing them, when they are both dangerous and useless, as in the case of wolves, tigers, foxes, and beasts of prey. But the law of God is, that animals are not to be annoyed, tormented, maimed, or killed merely for our amusement or idle recreation. They are to be allowed to enjoy all their native habits and instincts in peace, to roam the fields, to skim the air, to penetrate the flood, and to move in their several elements without molestation. We have received an express grant of them for our sustenance and for our use; and when our sustenance or our use is concerned, we may take them to that end. But we have no right to go a step farther than this, or to produce one unnecessary pang in the inferior creation. We have no right to confine, to maim, to teaze, or to annoy the inoffensive and harmless tribes. They are to be left at large to regale the woods with their songs, to enliven nature with their alert and joyous gambols, to provide for the wants of themselves and of their young, and to be so many visible evidences

to the eye of reason, that the Lord is good and gracious, and that his tender mercies are over all his works.

2. Another argument against cruelty to animals is presented by the example of God. We are required to be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful. This precept relates chiefly to our conduct towards our fellow-creatures, but it extends also to our treatment of the inferior animals, for God shows us an example of mercy in his dealings with them. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the knowledge and permission of your heavenly Father." "He covereth the heaven with clouds, he prepareth rain for the earth, he maketh grass to grow upon the mountains, he giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry," Ps. cxlvii. 8, 9. The mercy of God to the inferior animals was beautifully illustrated by a very simple circumstance, under the law, which the Psalmist notices with delight, it was in allowing the sparrow and the swallow the protection of his altar, from which it was not allowed to drive them away. "Yea the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God." The commands given to men to show mercy to the inferior animals, and which we have already illustrated, also show the kindness of God towards these, the works of his hands. And we cannot but believe, even though there were no express proof of the subject, that the God of all grace must delight in the happiness of the inferior creation, which he has made capable of enjoyments of various kinds, and is seen to provide so bountifully with necessary comforts and blessings. How wise and how good are the arrangements of providence towards the various tribes of irrational beings! They are clothed with a covering nicely adapted to the nature of their mode of life, and to the degree of cold or heat which prevails in the particular climate where they reside. They are also furnished with means finely fitted for obtaining the particular kind of food, of whatever description it may be, which is best adapted to their natures, and most conducive to their happiness, and usually possess it in great abundance. They are farther provided with a power of defending or of protecting themselves from their natural enemies, some by their strength, and others by their instinctive cunning, and some by their agility or swiftness. All of them enjoy much happiness, and at certain seasons it is so exuberant that they discover it by the most obvious signs of gratulation, whilst their ordinary state is one of composed and serene satisfaction.

But ample as is the evidence which the condition of the brute creation furnishes of the goodness of God, we do not see them enjoying at present all the happiness which God intended that they should possess. And, in making this remark, we do not now allude merely to those encroachments and invasions on the peace of the animal world which the cruelty of man instigates him to commit, but to that more general calamity which has befallen both man and beast by the sin of our first parents; "so that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain even until now." They are involved in sufferings consequent upon the fall of man, being committed, as it were, to the same fortune with us, and partaking with us of the privations, sorrows, and dangers, which we have brought upon ourselves by our guilt and disobedience. And we ought to take pity upon them the more on this account as our blameless fellow-sufferers; and, instead of aggravating, diminish, as far as we can, the necessary evils of their lot. This is to resemble our heavenly Father. He has sent the Gospel to remedy the effects of the fall to us; and we should try, as far as in our power, if not to remedy, at least to lessen the evils of the fall to our hapless fellow-sufferers. Gratitude as well as duty urges to this. Our own sorrows should teach us to sympathize with the distress of others, and our deliverance should dispose us the more readily to assist and relieve them. If a ship's crew, for instance, after being shipwrecked, and thrown upon a desert island, were fortunately to have a ship sent out to search after them, and to bring them home, how ungrateful would they be if, caring only for themselves, they were to leave the animals that were cast ashore along with them, even though it were but a single dog, to bear all the horrors of starvation, whilst they themselves had escaped. The kindness of God to us in our low and lost estate should, in like manner, induce us to compassionate and befriend the creatures which, without any blame of their own, are involved in the consequences of our transgression. And

here it is worthy of being remarked, that the latter-day glory is described in its peace and delightful return, by the circumstance of amity and love being restored between man and beast, as well as between nation and nation. For not only shall wars cease, and rapine and injustice be driven from the earth, "but the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

3. Another argument against the sin of cruelty to animals we deduce from its tendency to harden the heart, and to injure the temper and feelings of those who habitually commit it. The temper and feelings, we all know, that are most indulged, become predominant; and a man, therefore, who unscrupulously vents his ill nature and passion against a beast, will become severe, harsh, and even savage in his turn of mind. He may strive, from various considerations, to check that anger or malignity in its outbreakings against his fellow-creatures which he indulges towards the animal creation; but the ruling passion will hurry him along, and he will find the attempt to suppress it exceedingly difficult, if not altogether impossible. A man accordingly who is cruel in the treatment of his animal cannot be a good husband, a kind parent, a humane neighbour, or a gentle and tender friend. It is even impossible that he should, however much he may try to be so. Cruel and tyrannical to the beasts that he works, he will of necessity carry the same temper into the relations and transactions of human life, and be an offensive, a violent, and even a dangerous member of society. Men cannot change their dispositions like their dress; but whatever disposition they encourage, it will become habitual and natural Now, in this respect, cruelty to the inferior animals, is connected with great detriment and injury to yourselves. It makes you sullen, rude, ferocious, wrathful, apt to strike, impatient of contradiction, and prone to every evil work. Nor is there any cause for the cruel treatment of the brute creation. They are often ignorant of the reason why it is inflicted, or incapable of avoiding it even if they did know. The wrath and beating inflicted upon them is usually a passionate and senseless wrath, like that which a fretful, impatient man when annoyed would show even against an inanimate thing. It is often a mere wanton show of ill humour. If there is an offence, perhaps some one else has given it—as a master or somebody, but the poor brute must feel the effects of it. And thus the inferior creation, particularly the domesticated part, have not only to do the work of man, but to bear his spleen and endure his senseless anger. And this many think there is no evil in, just because they can strike or maltreat a beast to a considerable extent, without being amenable to the laws of man. But they are not left without their punishment for this even in the present life, and hereafter they shall find all their cruelties recorded against them to their eternal damnation. In the present life they suffer in their souls; they become a prey to their own vile and revengeful passions, and spend their lives in a constant storm of anger at something or another. They also suffer by being spurned and disrespected by all who hate the cruel and wicked man. And they farther suffer in being unhappy in all the relations of domestic and social life, even the nearest and most interesting. We have somewhere read of a Roman magistrate, that when walking in a solemn procession on the day, we think, of his inauguration into office, a bird flew into his bosom, and took refuge amid the folds of his gown. Instead of kindly cherishing the little visitant thus brought unexpectedly to him by an uncommon incident, he rudely plucked it from his bosom and dashed it to the ground, where it was killed. On seeing this, he was immediately deposed from the magistracy by the people who elected him, as showing a temper utterly unfit for that honourable and responsible office, the duties of which require mercy to be mingled with authority. Now, if we saw a man showing cruelty to an animal, we should think him ill qualified for any employment whatever. We should fear that he was a cruel husband, an unkind master, an austere parent, and a quarrelsome neighbour. We could have

no confidence in him, and would not readily choose him for any situation which required kindness or good dispositions. But if the cruel man be thus hateful to our eye, what must he be in the estimation of that God, whose tender mercies are over all his works, and who, as we have seen, requires us to be merciful. Is he fit for heaven, that holy place where there is nothing to hurt or to destroy, but where love rules in every bosom, and binds all the inhabitants into one bond of the most endearing and holy intercourse? Or shall he not rather have his place assigned to him with those dark and malignant spirits, who delight in misery as their proper work, and who are consigned to a state of congenial wrath, and enmity, and despair?

4. Another argument against the sin of cruelty to animals is, that it is a mean and contemptible vice to which there is no temptation. It is the usual resource of the idle, the dissipated, the abandoned, and the cowardly. If you heard of a person that he was fond of attending upon dog fightings and cock fightings, you would conclude that, if a labourer, he was not industrious; if an artisan, that he was not skilful in his trade; if a merchant, that he was not respectable or thriving in his business; and if a man of property, that he was not possessed of much dignity of mind or of character. There is no laudable object in such degrading sport to engage the presence of a man of principle or to obtain his countenance. Almost any sin can say more for itself than this can; and though we do not think it extenuates a sin, that there is a temptation to it, we do conceive that it is a strong argument for avoiding a sin that it wants a temptation. And what but a love of vulgar and low excitement gives zest to sports in which animals are baited, tormented, mangled, and destroyed. It must be far from giving any pleasure to a good man, to see poor animals sacrificed as victims to a love of amusement, or to gratify the idle curiosity of unfeeling spectators. The reason of man is nowhere seen in a more degrading light than when employed in exciting and superintending the brute combatants in the arena of animal warfare. And when it is considered that such a grievous misapplication of reason cannot be made without a sacrifice of time and a neglect of important duties that cannot be justified, the meanness of the pursuit is not more contemptible than its guilt is heinous and detestable. What shall we say of that man who neglects the care of his family and the interests of his soul, that he may spend his days in the low and dissipated society that congregate for the miserable purpose of contesting the strength of their favourite animals? Is he employed in pursuits that are becoming the Gospel, or that can meet the approbation of God? Is the company, and the conversation, and the scenes in which he mingles, at all such as his own reason can approve, or his own conscience justify? Does he not know that his life has been given him for a far higher and nobler end than to waste it in such degrading and brutal sports. We despise the ambition even of the conqueror who rides at the head of a triumphant army, when he aims at renown, by spreading around him misery and death; but how infinitely more contemptible are those laurels which are gathered in the contested fields of brutal warfare, and by those who frequent the scenes of animal rage, where the fierce antagonists grapple with each other, and one or both sink in the agonies of death. Most mean and cowardly employment! most unworthy of man, who was formed in the image of God, and who provided so much high enjoyment in the fields of mental improvement or moral cultivation, and of religious duty. Are men possessing energies capable of the noblest and purest achievement, and who are but a little lower than the angels, to be seen without shame sporting themselves with the infuriated ragings of animal warfare, and letting themselves down, if possible, beneath the very brutes in whose fierce contentions they find a source of malignant and unholy joy? Could one suppose that men of such a degraded taste and mean ambition, were possessed of the same nature with those eminent and distinguished individuals who have adorned our species and illustrated our race, as philanthropists and sages, as apostles and martyrs? What a difference in employment between the man who occupies his time in preparing for some trial of strength or swiftness between his own animal and his neighbour's, and the man who is employed in promoting the temporal and spiritual interests of thousands and tens of thousands of his fellow-creatures! Nor is this high labour limited to one favourite class and denied to others, but may be shared in all. If you need excitement,

seek it not in mean and degrading pursuits, but in pursuing plans of private and public beneficence, in promoting the cause of the gospel, in extending the Redeemer's kingdom, and in promoting your own salvation and that of your fellow-men to the ends of the world.

5. Another argument against the sin of cruelty to animals, which we would urge, is, the crying injustice of such conduct. We have no right to abuse the inferior creation, although we have a right to use them; and this is a broad and important distinction, and one that will be perfectly clear to every well-disposed individual who is willing to be governed by it in his treatment of the creatures. We have a right to use the inferior creatures to assist us in our labours, according to their strength and capacity, and also for our sustenance in the case of those that are proper for food; but we have no right to agonize their frames, to sport with their sufferings, or to embitter their existence. They are included beneath the law of mercy and kindness which extends to all sentient being, and its protection will be gladly conceded to them by every humane person. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." A righteous man is one who is just or equitable, a person who renders to all their due, and it is said of such a one that he regardeth the life of his beast, that is, holds it in consideration. This implies that he takes a concern in its comfort, in its safety, and in its happiness. The righteous man, he who fears God, and who has a principle of duty in his heart, gives his beast what is just, and acknowledges its claim to his sympathy, his protection, and his care. He will not oppress it from recklessness, nor overwork it from avarice, nor maltreat it from malignant feeling, nor endanger it from foolhardiness or a love of bravado; but he will be tender of its safety, its wellbeing, and its life. He will give it a uniform and proper degree of care, and this not for his own interest merely, but from a principle of duty, and because he feels it to be just and right to do so. Those persons, are persons of a depraved nature and of a seared conscience, who can feel no obligation to do a thing which the law of man does not enforce, or which their own pecuniary interests do not demand. A beast is in bad keeping when it falls into such hands. They mind only themselves and not it, and if they have any mercy it is from selfish and personal consideration, and not from any regard to the life of the beast. If it is not their own, but their neighbours, they will take their full use of it, and over-ride and waste it with as little remorse as though it were an engine or a hobby, and not a sentient creature, subject to exhaustion, to pain, to disease, and to death. But men of this description have no title to be called righteous. They are wholly destitute of that charity which is the sum and substance of the law of God. It is selfishness and hardness of heart that form their character. Going the full length that they may with impunity in caring for themselves, and disregarding others, they would go still farther if they dared. They would treat their fellow creatures in the same manner as they treat a brute, with as little tenderness or regard, if they had it in their power. He that is unfaithful in that which is least, would be found also unfaithful in that which is much. Setting the law of mercy at defiance in the one case, they would also disregard its voice in the other. But in no case can this law be disregarded without sin and danger. The cruel man who injures the brute creation, and who withholds from them their due, may be passed by the laws of men for his offence, but he shall not escape the just judgment of God. His severe and tyrannical usage of the despised and injured beast shall at last find an avenger, in the person of its Almighty owner and rightful Lord, who will call him to an account for what he now considers his irresponsible proceedings. No man is irresponsible; and no cruelty will escape unpunished at the judgment of the great day. Then the whole conduct, yea, the whole dispositions and principles of men will be investigated, and every one shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have done good or evil. "With the merciful the Lord will show himself merciful; with an upright man he will show himself upright; with the pure he will show himself pure; and with the froward he will show himself froward. For the Lord will save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks," Ps. xviii. 25—27.

Having brought forward arguments, we trust, sufficient to convince every one here present, of the guilt and baseness of the sin which is the topic of discourse, it might

now be proper to turn the current of your feelings and indignation against some of the more prevalent and heinous forms in which the sin exists, with a view to expose and condemn them. But as an attempt to do so would necessarily be very limited and defective, and as it might turn your attention upon particular acts of injury, more than upon the necessity of abstaining from all injury whatever to the brute creation, we shall not at present engage in it. We would merely notice some of the causes which most commonly lead to the commission of cruelties upon the brute creation; which will, perhaps, lead you as well into an acquaintance with this part of our subject as the particular enumeration of specific acts of cruelty. One of these is mere thoughtlessness and wantonness. Much cruelty arises from this source. The animal is hurt, and perhaps injured for life from the act of a single moment, which the person concerned never reflects upon any more. This charge is often to be brought against the young, who have a thousand ways of tormenting and cruelly destroying the domestic animals, from no other motive than mere love of mischief and frolic. What is sport to you, my young friends, is pain and perhaps death to them. And, surely, tender as your age may be, when you seriously think of it, you must be sensible that you are committing a most unjustifiable and heinous action, when you trifle with the sufferings, and rejoice over the dying agonies of an inoffensive animal, the victim of your cruel play. Does not your heart condemn you? and is not God greater than your heart, and he knoweth all things. Avoid then all such acts of cruelty yourselves, and shun such associates as brutal and unworthy who are capable of committing them. For what can be expected of youths who are unfeeling, but that they will, unless they repent, be bad and wicked men?

Another cause of much cruelty inflicted upon the animal creation is *avarice*. For this cause they are over wrought, and at the same time starved. The burden that might almost serve for the strength of two is laid upon one. And the old and infirm, instead of being released from toil, are continued on, till they die under the very yoke.

A third cause of this sin is the love of excitement. Hence the strifes, the conflicts, and the struggles, which are got up among different animals for the amusement of their owners and others—the bear-garden, the race-course, the chase, and the cock-pit, are frequented mainly from this unworthy motive. Man, immortal man, for want of finding interests any where else, has recourse for excitement to the brutal conflicts of animal strength and rage. Has knowledge no fair fields to invite the entrance of these otherwise listless men? Is there no work of honourable and useful enterprise that can engage their time and their talents? Have they so much leisure in their short span of life from the works preparatory for eternity, as that they know not what to make of themselves? Oh! no; these sports are not only sinful as being cruel, but as being a mad waste of precious time, and a perversion of the faculties of the soul of man from the high and sacred ends for which he has received such exalted endowments.

But we cannot go farther at present from a regard to your time and patience, neither can we conclude the discourse without addressing you one word, upon a subject still more important and universally interesting than that which has been engaging our attention. Whilst we would beseech you to have mercy upon the inferior creation, let us entreat you to consider your own souls whether you have mercy upon them. Can you say with the Psalmist, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth?" Or can we say with the apostle Peter, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." Know your own value; estimate the worth of your immortal souls; and flee from the wrath to come, by taking hold of the Saviour, and uniting yourselves to him. He came to seek and to save that which is lost; and he would now win you back from the path of destruction; he would deliver you from the snare of the devil, and he would redeem you from death and from hell. Fly, then, from your enemies, and take hold of Christ Jesus. Place yourselves under his protection, and employ him as your refuge. He is a gracious and a merciful Saviour. He desires and he seeks only your well-being. He beseeches you to come to him, that he may heal your diseases, and forgive your iniquities and redeem you from destruction. He is now

inviting you with the same earnestness to come to him as he formerly invited Jerusalem, when he wept over that devoted city, knowing its guilt and approaching desolation: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets, and killest those that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not."

What a value has the immortal soul of man, capable as it is of everlasting enjoyment, or of endless misery, and destined to be the prey of ceaseless anguish and remorse, or the possessor of immutable felicity in the heavens at the right hand of God! We despise, in the animal creation, the silly victim of human guile, that is allured by some few grains of corn, to enter into the snares where it loses its liberty, and perhaps its life, in blindly catching at the offered bribe of the tempter. But, oh! where shall we find any folly at all equal to that of those who prefer the pleasures of sin to everlasting salvation, and who sacrifice their souls for the deceitful gratifications which Satan places in their offer! Could we describe to you what you lose, in neglecting the care of your souls, and in giving them a prey to temptation, you would rather endure the greatest sufferings of the present life, than by living in pleasure and wickedness, consign yourselves hereafter to everlasting destruction. You may obtain some conception of the value of the soul, by contemplating what God has done to save you from sin and from its fatal consequences. It was to this end his own Son came into the world, and preached himself to men, beseeching them to come and find life, and sent out apostles to beseech men in his stead, and laid down his life to make an atonement. Turn, then, to Christ, who has come up on such a gracious work, and give yourselves up wholly to him, that you may be saved from hell, and from Satan, and from death.

And whilst you have mercy upon your own souls, walk in love and in mercy toward all men, and thus give evidence that you are the children of God, your Father in heaven. Cultivate the blessed mind of Christ Jesus, who was gracious and compassionate, and who went about continually doing good. Make the case of others your own, and feel and act for them as you would wish them in like circumstances to do for you. Let your affectionate regards embrace all men, and let your offices of kindness be as extensive as your means. Allow no other restriction to lie upon your disposition and willingness to do good, but what arises from the necessary limits which must somewhere or other circumscribe man's utmost efforts. And confine not your concerns and your beneficence merely to the relief of the diseases or the temporal wants of your fellow-creatures. If you have learned from the Gospel, you will know that it is not in outward things that man's happiness mainly consists, but that it depends upon the state of his soul, upon his interest in Christ, and upon his enjoyment of divine grace.

Overlook not the best interests either of yourselves or of your fellow-creatures. Seek the present, and also the future happiness of all men. Let it be the burden of your prayers, the object of your lives, your highest ambition, to be useful; and let it be your proudest reward, to have in any degree lessened the burden of human misery, or to have augmented the sum of human happiness. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy;" may this be your portion, through Christ Jesus, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be ascribed everlasting glory and praise.

ON CHRIST'S AGONY AND PASSION;

A SERMON PREACHED ON 12TH JULY, 1835

By the Rev. DUNCAN M'CALLUM,

Minister of Arisaig.

"*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.*"—MATT. xxvi. 38.

NOTHING is more astonishing than that the Son of God should assume our frail nature, and sojourn on earth; but having taken upon him our nature with all its infirmities, we need not wonder at any part of his sufferings, none of which was greater than that which made him express the memorable words chosen as the text. In this passage of Scripture is described a scene the most interesting to a Christian that could be brought before him. An awful solemnity is drawn over this place, I may say of solitude, in which the Saviour, with a few of his disciples, are represented in the act of private devotion! It was an ancient custom to retire to high places to worship. The grandeur of lofty scenes of nature, and solitude, and silence, is well adapted to produce the greatest effect on the mind, where the soul is poured out in adoration. Hence holy men retired from the world, and paid that religious homage to the Lord of nature, in places where the surrounding scenery assisted to inspire and exalt the feelings that filled them with solemn awe!

When a man is to appear on any scene in which he is to make a public exhibition, or to discharge any duty of importance, it is necessary that he should make some previous preparation. The commander of an army retires from the tented field, and is found in solitude, or on a mountain side, surveying the ground, and laying the plan of battle, or concerting measures for future operations. The man of business retires into his closet, if a religious man, and shuts himself from the bustle of the world, and endeavours to call home his thoughts from worldly concerns, that he may be enabled to lift up his soul to the Most High; and when he sees the last scene in which he is to act on earth before him, and is made sensible of the approach of death, will, or ought to set his house in order, and to fortify himself by the promises of the Gospel of truth. Such, then, was the scene of Gethsemane! The hour was drawing near in which the Son of God was to be betrayed into the hands of men—the Saviour of the world to be put to death, by those whom he would save? This scene opens up to us an event the greatest and the most important ever known, with circumstances the most interesting in every particular. A personage of the highest distinction, so marked with the greatest humility, so full of condescension and of love, so beneficent and benevolent in all his actions and conduct towards men, to be caught, as he foretold, as the meanest culprit, and condemned as the worst of malefactors—all which presented themselves before his mind, and made him exceeding sorrowful! The ingenuous mind feels more in anticipation than in the actual hour of pain and suffering. The tender-hearted Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem, the compassionate friend of the entombed Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead; He who sympathized with the widow, to whom he restored her only son, that her neighbours was carrying to the grave—had now all his own sufferings in view; but there was none to sympathize with him in the awful hour! His followers? No. One of them betrayed him. The self-confident Peter denied him! They all fled. He knew it in the time of his agony! He foresaw the whole. He was to be nailed to the cursed tree. He was to suffer the shameful death of the cross. And was not this too much for the innocent? But this was not all, nor a great part of his sufferings. It was enough to make him sorrowful, to overcast the mind with the gloomy and sad feelings that ingratitude is apt to stir up in a pious person, conscious of doing good to those who requite his benevolent deeds with evil. But "his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." What a state! "And he fell upon his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Wicked men and

devils conspired against him, and had done what they could, persecuting him from the cradle to the grave. But he was now to suffer more, much more than all combined together could do in their efforts to overwhelm the guiltless. He was to suffer the wrath of the Almighty. This was the bitter cup that made his soul exceeding sorrowful! This was the bitter cup of which he was afraid, and that he would have passed from him if possible. This was what made him labour internally, till heavy drops of sweat fell from his body on the ground; and this bitter cup which he drank, submissive to the will of his Father, that made him exclaim on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

No wonder should his human nature shrink back at the sight of such sufferings! As to what men could do, he like others might have suffered in silence, with this difference, which very much aggravates the pain, that he was perfectly innocent, and that he deserved good at their hands. To be, therefore, put to death between two thieves, was making the disgrace as flagrant as his enemies could have possibly done. But it was not for an alleged act of rebellion, or intended assumption of royalty: it was not for the pretended infringement of the laws of an empire, or any thing contrary to the customs of the nation, a people to whom he was sent, that he was to drink the bitter cup. It was for the sins of the world—our original and actual transgressions entailed on the posterity of Adam by the fall. He had taken our transgressions upon himself, and was made a curse for us; and in this the bitter cup consisted. When we consider the Being that was to inflict the punishment, the Almighty, who made all things by the power of his word, bitter indeed must that cup have been—the cup of his wrath! The Lord of nature, infinite and perfect, required full satisfaction; and who could have given it? The whole human race could not. The greatest saints that ever appeared on the stage of life could not. No mere man is able to satisfy divine justice. The Saviour of the world knew it; he gave himself a voluntary sacrifice for our sins. As he came to offer himself, he never attempted to escape from his enemies when, as he well knew, the hour was at hand. But the near prospect of his sufferings, which have no parallel in the history of the world, almost overwhelmed his human nature, when he said, as St. John relates, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." The evangelist Luke informs us, that an angel appeared to him from heaven, strengthening him, when he, being in an agony, prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down on the ground; yet was he always submissive to the will of his Father. "Nevertheless not as I will; but as thou wilt," were the words he added in concluding the prayer. "And he went again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." He prayed the third time, and came and told his disciples that the hour was at hand that he was betrayed into the hands of sinners; they might now sleep on; the agony was over; he was perfectly reconciled to his Father's will.

II. Such was the scene in which he felt in the most lively manner all the contumely and disgrace heaped upon him by an evil generation; and we have endeavoured to describe what might have been observed by the disciples whom he took with him when he began to be sorrowful and heavy. But the scene that lay before him, and which he alone saw when in agony, as well as knew when he foretold his sufferings, was near, and was laid open to the world when the hour came. It may not be improper to bring it before you on this occasion, when you are come to commemorate his death and sufferings. It was this scene that rendered the other memorable; that caused the travail of his soul, while suffering in anticipation; that filled his innocent mind with heaviness.

When a man is troubled about any important matter, his mind is confused; his reason is called into exercise; he is made to think upon it seriously and frequently, endeavouring to extricate himself from difficulties, or prepare to accomplish his undertaking in the most proper and best way. If he feel himself unable to perform what he is desirous of performing, or is incumbent upon him to do, and finds himself forsaken by those in whom he placed hope, or that he cannot rely upon such as should assist him, he, if he fear his Maker, will look up to him, and place his confidence in him. He is the God of his salvation, and he trusts in him. Then his mind becomes settled. He

submits to his will, who has ordained all things for the best. He believes that through his grace, his trials and troubles will ultimately tend to his advantage; and in this belief he will receive grace to strengthen his faith, and to confirm him in his hope. He will say, Thy will be done. Lo! Christ's human nature. And while he yet spake, Judas, one of the twelve, came to betray him. He came with a great multitude, armed with swords and staves, to apprehend an innocent person. They came with authority from the chief priests and elders, a promiscuous multitude, made up of many from the rabble, many of them probably ignorant of the cause for which he was to be apprehended, but all fully determined to take him. They came out to take him as a thief with swords and staves. They seemed not to know the pacific life he led, the few followers he had, nor that he was every day among them, never attempting to fly away nor conceal himself. He made no resistance, but checked him who drew his sword. He healed the ear of the servant of the High Priest, saying, at the same time, that had he prayed to his Father, that he would give him ten legions of angels; showing his power in a manner that was more obvious to the senses, as St. John relates, (xviii. 6,) "As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell on the ground." But the band of men and officers, from the chief priests and Pharisees, were obeying orders—were acting in ignorance of the truth. Some might have been inexcusable, as the men most likely came hither like those who gather a mob, and are bent on mischief. Judas, one of the twelve who followed the Lord, and was intrusted with the scrip, and experienced his love and kindness, and heard his doctrines, had not a shadow of excuse. He sold him to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver. He, after concluding the bargain, sought opportunity to betray him. He gave them a sign, and observe the insidious way he took to accomplish his design. He came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master, and gave him a kiss. We shall not enlarge on the character of a person who could have attempted to deceive in such a manner. His master might have turned him away with scorn as he merited, and might have told him, in presence of the multitude, what he deserved. But the meek and lowly Jesus only said, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Yet this act of one of the disciples must have caused more pain to the tender, compassionate mind of Jesus, than the band of men and officers, who came in that threatening attitude with swords and staves. His words, *I am he*, made them fall back on the ground; yet his saying to the traitor, "Friend, why art thou come?" had no effect on the hardened heart of the covetous Judas. He felt not, and he repented not till it was too late! and this act of the traitor linked the scenes of his agony to that of his passion, which closed with these words, "It is finished!"

(To be Continued.)

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. DUNCAN M'CALLUM, Arisaig.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN CLAPPERTON, Johnstone.

ON CHRIST'S AGONY AND PASSION;

A Sermon by the Rev. DUNCAN M'CALLUM.—*Concluded.*

Why was he thus apprehended and led away to Caiaphas the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled? Why would a multitude come with swords and staves to lay hold on a pacific, meek, humble person? False rumour might have carried many groundless reports to their ears, open to receive anything bad! But what is most surprising is, that those who sat in judgment were at a loss to find matter of accusation. There was no just ground for accusing him, no more than for apprehending him. They were perfectly sensible of it; and all the counsel sought false witness against him—against the innocent, the just, the benevolent, yes, the meek and holy Jesus, who went about continually doing good, to put him to death, but found none. And although many false witnesses came, yet found they none. This is not a little surprising. Could they not have induced many to bear witness by promises and bribes, as they sought false witnesses? The difficulty lay in this, how could they prove things that were obviously false, without any ground to go upon? At last two false witnesses came, and let us see and consider what they said. They made use of his own words, and of his very expression, that he could not deny, and to which no one could object. How cunning and ingenious the wicked! You will find the words in the Gospel of John ii. 19. Jesus himself declared to the Jews that he would build the temple in three days. You will see from the immediately following verse, how they misunderstood the meaning. The Jews answered, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" The Evangelist, in the verse following it, explains the true meaning; but he spoke of the temple of the body, and his disciples, after his resurrection, remembered this, and believed the scriptures. Not so the council. And the High Priest arose, and said unto him, "Answerest thou nothing?" Then he adjured him by the living God to tell them "Whether he was the Christ, the Son of God?" On receiving an answer, and hearing him affirm it, by foretelling his future glory, the High Priest rent his clothes, declaring that what he said was blasphemy, and asking the opinion of the council, they answered, "He is guilty of death." What a trial! but his hour was come. The Jews were but the instruments of death; yet his enemies had done all in their power, and others had done what they could to dishonour and disgrace him. They spat in his face and buffeted him, and others smote him, adding these reproachful words, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote thee?"

Pilate, the governor, to whom they had led Jesus, knowing that it was for envy they had delivered him, was satisfied in himself of his innocence; and, no doubt, the message sent him by his wife made him desirous o.

saving an innocent person; and he proposed to the multitude, who had been stirred up by the priests and elders, and that became clamorous, a notable prisoner, as the governor was wont to relieve to the people a prisoner at the feast. They raised their voice in favour of Barabbas, when they all said, "Let Jesus be crucified." Pilate seeing that he could not prevail in persuading them, or in appeasing the people that was raising a tumult, took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." His enemies were not yet satisfied. All the people answered, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Jesus was scourged and delivered to be crucified. To the injustice of the sentence of death, and the iniquitous proceedings, they must have racked their ingenuity in exhibiting him in the mock show of royalty, putting a robe of scarlet upon him, who plainly told that his kingdom was not of this world, and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and spat on him, and took a reed and smote him on the head, and, after debasing him as much as in them lay, they put on his own robes and led him away to crucify him. Yet were they not weary of showing their malevolence alone to the most benevolent person on earth, at Golgotha they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. Having crucified him—nailing him to the cross—they parted his garments, casting lots, fulfilling the ancient prophecy, and set up over his head his accusation, written, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." When nailed to the tree—hand and feet—between two thieves, they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself, if thou be the Son of God come down from the cross." Likewise did the chief priests, scribes, and elders. The thieves, also, that were crucified along with him, cast the same in his teeth. Thus did wicked men what they could, yet was he like a lamb brought unto the slaughter, and he opened not his mouth. But he suffered much more than his enemies had inflicted or were able to have inflicted on him, or possible to have inflicted on him. "Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." What time in a state of pain and disgrace, a spectacle of woe! "And, about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" How hard his condition! The eternal Son of God! This was the hour that he foretold to his followers, and was near when in agony! The Lamb of God offered up a sacrifice for the sins of his people! "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." This scene passed not unnoticed. The enemies of Jesus were not the only spectators, nor such as were passing by the only witnesses of his sufferings, nor were all hardened sinners, whose minds were not open to conviction. All nature saw the distressing and shameful scene, and felt, and was shocked. "The earth quaked; the centurion and those that were with him watching Jesus, feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Such a scene never passed before the eyes of man. Never had angels seen the like. Jesus was a man of sorrow; he was made acquainted with grief at an early period; but here he achieved the greatest action in the records of time. He trod the wine press alone, and of his people there was none with him. He obtained victory over death and the grave! He fulfilled all the ancient prophecy concerning him, and satisfied divine justice.

To conclude. Ye have assembled this day, Christians, to commemorate the death and sufferings of your Lord and Saviour, and we have endeavoured to exhibit to you the scenes upon which these happened, in an imperfect way, indeed, but so as to make you see how much he has done and suffered for mankind; and which will make all worthy partakers of the supper of the Lamb of God this day understand, better than we can express, how much he loved the souls of men, and also the enmity of sinful man to his God. We shall not ask you how much you now feel? How you sympathize? What shame ought to cover your faces? as we have all been the causes of his death and sufferings. Nor will we enlarge on the great sin of those who exclaimed. "Let him be crucified," nor of the unrelenting spirit of the high priests and elders, the fell envy of the Scribes and Pharisees, or the blind fury of

the people who reviled him, but, we would ask, Have you ever felt that enmity in your hearts which sin put between God and man? and have you not been girded in the spirit for it? Have you not repented with shame and deep humility? Have you not loved him, who first loved you and the whole world with unspeakable love, with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind? But if, on the contrary, you have loved the world, your own desires, inclinations, habits, prejudices, or whatever is forbidden by the word of God, I must tell you, that you have been crucifying the Lord of life and glory. And, after what you have heard, will you not say, "Is it possible that we should crucify or persecute a being so benevolent and just?" It is, my friends, the sinful nature of fallen man that must be regenerated or renewed, to lead you to it. May He who created all things by the word of his power, create in you a clean heart, and renew within you a right spirit, and to his name be all praises. Amen.

THE PEACE WHICH JESUS PROMISES TO HIS DISCIPLES;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOHN CLAPPERTON,

Minister of the Secession Church, Johnstone.

"*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*"—John xvi. 33.

In these words, the Saviour and his disciples are presented to us in a very interesting point of view. Having almost finished his course, he is about to leave the world and them, and to go to his Father; and they were soon to be deprived of the presence and instructions of their best friend, and to be sent out into a world that was to rise up in arms against them. As the Saviour was not only a partaker of our nature, but possessed all the best feelings of humanity in a state of perfection, we may well suppose that, on the present occasion, he would fully display the heart of a friend. It is at the hour of separation that all the finer sensibilities of our nature are excited and called forth into exercise. Then the heart, touched by the moving hand of sympathy, discovers those latent and tender affections which constitute the basis and perfection of genuine friendship. Then some words of tenderness and love are mutually exchanged, when the full heart allows utterance to the tongue; and some kindly actions are mutually performed, to soothe and support the soul during absence.

When the hour of his departure arrived, the Saviour discovered a deep and tender concern both for the present and future welfare of his disciples. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." As an indubitable proof of this, he calls them together; eats with them the paschal supper for the last time; condescends so far as to wash their feet; institutes the sacred memorial of his love and death; and then, in the most affectionate manner, addresses to them that farewell discourse, full of divine consolation, of which the text is the conclusion. In this discourse, there is no glitter of ornament, none of the false beauties of eloquence, but the fullest display of the love and tenderness of the heart. The true, the long-tried, the unfailing friend is, in every verse and line, fully set before us. But in this discourse you cannot fail to observe a striking peculiarity. The Saviour not only leads the minds of his disciples to those subjects that were well calculated to soothe and support them, but also to those which were equally fitted to awaken and alarm their fears. He speaks to them in the plainest terms of coming tribulation. The men of the world, at the hour of separation, studiously avoid speaking unpleasant truths to their friends, however necessary and important these may be. Nay, even good men, at the same period, are often ready to dwell on the smooth and pleasant side of things, and to inspire the hope of future felicity and grandeur; while experience, rational probability, and the Bible, might lead them to prognosticate very different things. But

the Saviour proved himself to be the best friend, because, on all occasions, when necessary, he told his friends the truth—the undisguised truth. Thus, at the trying moment when the words of the text were uttered, while he amply promises them all joy and peace in believing, he also most plainly tells them that they were to meet with sorrow, trouble, and persecution. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Here he tells his friends the whole truth; but however discouraging to them, in the meantime, these words might be, yet in the end they would prove one of the sources of their joy and strength.

The words of the text were first addressed to the disciples, to comfort and support their minds under all the cares, and difficulties, and dangers of their apostolic life; but they were not spoken for their sake alone, but for the sake of his people and servants in every age of the church. These, as well as the disciples, must have tribulation in the world of one kind or another; and, therefore, the compassionate Saviour, who loves all his people, had their comfort and support also in view when he said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

I. I shall speak of the peace which Jesus here promises to his disciples; and,

II. I shall show how his words are fitted to maintain their peace of mind, amidst all the tribulations of the world.

I. Of the peace here promised to the disciples.

1. It is spiritual peace. This plainly appears from this consideration, that it was to be enjoyed by them while they were to have tribulation in the world. Besides, this is the peace which Jesus promises to his disciples in these words: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." From the connexion in which these words stand, it is evident that this peace is a fruit of the Spirit, whom the Saviour had promised to send to his disciples, under the designation of the Comforter, who was to abide with them for ever, and to lead them into all truth. This peace, then, is a fruit of the Spirit's gracious operations on the souls of believers. It flows from a well-grounded persuasion of our reconciliation to God through the atoning blood of Christ, from the gradual mortification of sin in the soul, and from the hope of eternal life. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." From these sources alone, spiritual or real peace can flow. We can enjoy no true happiness of which God is not both the author and finisher. There is an inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

2. This peace is peculiar to the friends of Jesus. *In me* ye shall have peace. In the text, he addresses his friends only. His disciples were his only hearers, and in them he may be justly considered as addressing all those, in every age, who should believe on him through their word. All these shall have peace—that peace which Jesus purchased by his blood, and which he lives in heaven to bestow. They are all united to Christ by that one Spirit who dwells in him and in them; and they are all furnished with that precious faith by which, as we shall soon see, they obtain peace and rest to their souls from the grace and power of their living Head. "My peace I give unto you." But this peace is altogether peculiar to such persons. All the wicked are entire strangers to it; because they are separated from Him who is the Prince of Peace, and utter strangers to that holiness which is the cause or root of all true happiness. These men are joined to the world and sin. To such men there can be no peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

3. The enjoyment of this peace is not at all inconsistent with the endurance of tribulation in the world. Those who know not God exclaim, These things are utterly inconsistent! Who can have tribulation, and at the same time have peace? When tribulation begins, peace ends! "But we have not so learned Christ." He has said, "In me ye shall have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." Both assertions, then, must be true, and consequently consistent.

When, in the language of Scripture, we describe the peace which Christians have in Christ Jesus as great, passing all understanding, we do not mean that they are in all respects or perfectly happy. They are happy in some, but not in other points of view. That they are happy, or have true peace, in some respects, none can doubt who believe the Bible, and have tasted that

the Lord is gracious. They have peace in God their Saviour, and this peace is in exact proportion to the vigour and steadfastness of their faith. But this peace, as I have said, is spiritual, is seated in the mind; and what I now say is, that it may exist, nay, be very exquisite, when the Christian has to endure the severest blasts of adversity. In his body he may feel sickness and pain; in his estate he may suffer damage and loss; by the ruthless persecutor he may be hunted like a wild beast, cast into the dungeon, or put even to the torture; and, in his character and friends, he may suffer injury and loss greater and harder to be borne than any other injury or loss he may meet with in the vale of tears; and yet the peace of his mind, on the whole, may remain unruffled and undiminished. Think not that this is mere assertion; that this sentiment is the mere child of imagination! In the history of the Apostles, after the ascension of their Lord, we have an ample and most appropriate proof and illustration of this delightful truth. Scarcely had he entered into his glorious rest at his Father's right hand, when they had to enter on that scene of tribulation which is pointed out to them in the text; and their history, subsequent to that period, fully informs us that in the world they had tribulation. The Apostles were out of sight at that time—the best friends of truth and of mankind. They were the heralds of divine truth—the messengers of heavenly peace. Their whole souls glowed with love to God, and with benevolence to men; and, like their divine Master, they went about doing good. But they had to endure, or at least were constantly exposed, to almost every thing from which the human heart is most averse. They were suspected, hated, and reproached; to fatigue, hunger, and want, they were no strangers; they were scourged and imprisoned; they were persecuted, afflicted, tormented. Some, perhaps all of them, knew that they were to meet with a violent death.

But on any or all of these accounts, were they deprived of peace? No. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, kept their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Hence we hear Paul speaking thus in his own name, and in that of all his brethren:—"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed;" and with regard to himself, Paul thus declares—"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." To the Corinthians he thus writes, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." The Apostles, we are told, departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

Thus you see how the Apostles had peace in Christ, while in the world they had tribulation. Rude and frequent as the tempests were by which they were assailed, they could not destroy, nor even check the growth of that fair plant of heavenly origin, peace of mind, which their Saviour had planted in their souls, and which he was daily watering with the influences of his Spirit. And this, to a certain degree, is the case with all the people of God. In Jesus they have peace, while in the world they have tribulation. Some of them are destined to struggle with poverty and affliction all their life; others, to suffer the saddest reverses of fortune; while others see one dear friend after another snatched from them by the unpitying and unsparing hand of death, and laid in the cold grave. But all this may take place and yet peace of mind may be enjoyed. For these things, disastrous as they are, cannot shut up the sources whence the Christian's peace flows. Amid all these tribulations the saint of God can say, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Rom. viii. 35—39.

4. The tribulations of the world have a tendency to interrupt, and often do interrupt this peace. This is plainly implied in these words, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Why did the Saviour add these words, if that peace which he promised to his followers could suffer no interruption from the world. He had told them that they were to be hated of all men for his name's sake. He knew that the world would prove a dreadful enemy to their peace; that its sorrows and persecutions would often disturb their joys, and present

to their view the darkest prospects. This the Apostles soon experienced. "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble that came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." But Jesus says in the text, Confide in me, be not moved; take courage and comfort to yourselves. I have already entered the lists with the world, with men and devils; I have come off a conqueror; and, by my death, resurrection, and exaltation to my throne of glory, will at last obtain a complete and final victory over the world, and all the opposition it can muster; and, therefore, though the world may frown, rage, and harass, it shall not be able to take my peace from you.

When we describe the Christian's peace as most exquisite, we do not mean that he has the actual experience of such peace at all times. He has his days of sweet sunshine, but also, his nights of gloomy darkness. When affliction comes on him, or those dear to him; when riches take wings and fly away, and chill poverty advances apace; when the tongue of calumny is whetted, and the sword of persecution is brandished against him, the Christian's peace is disturbed, and, for a while, may be interrupted. When all things go contrary to the wishes and hopes of the human heart, where is the person now to be found who, in all respects, can feel and act like a Christian? Anxiety, sorrow, and fear are ready to seize on the heart; mild cheerfulness to forsake the face, while the feet are ready to turn aside from, or to stumble in the ways of righteousness. One of the firmest believers said in the evil day of sorrow and fear, "All these things are against me, I shall go down into the grave mourning."

5. This peace shall never be totally or finally taken away from the Christian. This is the joyous truth which the text, as a whole, is designed to teach us. This peace is given by Christ the Prince of Peace. His love, wisdom, and power are engaged, and his faithful promises are pledged; he has given his people another comforter, who shall abide with them forever; he employs his word and ordinances—to maintain, promote, and perfect their peace. The thick tempests of adversity, then, may gather and rage; but the faithful Saviour will not suffer their peace to be finally destroyed. "And ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

II. I shall show how the words of Christ are fitted to maintain the peace of his people amidst all the tribulations of life.

1. They tell Christians beforehand what they have to expect in the world, viz., tribulation; and, therefore, teach them to make preparation for it. God has in mercy concealed from men the particular events of their lives. The particular knowledge of these would serve no purpose but to torment men before the time, and to tempt them to endeavour to defeat the designs of providence. Human life would be altogether insupportable, did we know beforehand all the vexations, pains, and losses we were to suffer, and all the dangers to which we were to be exposed, during the course of thirty or forty, or threescore and ten long years. Such would be the results of a particular knowledge of our future tribulations. But this is not the result of general information on this subject. This is or may be productive of the very happiest effects. This tells us what we are to lay our account with at one time, and in one form and degree or another; and thus it is a loud but merciful call to us to prepare ourselves for the event. Such is the information that Jesus has given us respecting our coming tribulations. It is very general. "In this world ye shall have tribulation."

A principal part of the misery of mankind arises from want of attention to such information. Men suffer the many keen pangs of disappointment, because they will indulge those wishes and hopes which general experience, the dictates of sober reason, and the word of God, pronounce to be groundless and extravagant. The votary of pleasure, wealth, fame, power, enters the path which respectively conducts to each of these, with the almost certain hope that the end he has in view will be attained. Neither the sad experience of thousands of his precursors in the same path, nor the sage instructions and warnings of moralists, philosophers, and divines, can teach him the necessity of moderating his wishes and hopes; of being cautious and diffident, and of making preparation for a failure or disappointment. Hence, the bitter anguish which many suffer when tribulation comes suddenly upon them, and all their towering hopes are levelled with the dust. But on the other hand, he is justly accounted a wise and prudent man, who employs every law-

ful method to guard against the evils, and to procure the neeessaries and eomforts of life; but who always employs these methods under the seeret but necessary eonviction that, for any thing he knows, they may entirely fail of sueeess. He thus prepares himself both for enjoying the blessings he desires, and for enduring the evils he fears.

Sueh is the plan which the words of Christ teach all his followers to adopt and pursue. He tells them that in the world they shall have tribulation; and, therefore, most unwise will they be, if they expect uninterrupted enjoyment of any kiud on this side of heaven; and do not prepare their minds for those sorrows and disasters with whieh they may meet. Lay your aecount then, Christians, with tribulation at one time, or of one kind or another; and this will have the happiest tendeney to prepare your minds for the evil day. For when the dark clouds of adversity streteh over your heads; when one pain seizes you, and one comfort is snatched from you after another, you shall be enabled to possess your souls in patienee, and to say—this is nothing more than what from the words of Christ I had reason to expeet. For support and eomfort under such trials, I have often prayed; and I still believe that the God, who eomforteth those that are east down, will not leave me, unpitied and unaided, to struggle with these diffieulties. My Saviour has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." This is the general lot of his followers; and what am I that I should expect to be an exeeption!

Christians, are you now enjoying health and prosperity? Lay your aeeount with affliction and adversity at some future period, and prepare for them. Are you at present involved in tribulation? Think not that some strange thing has happened unto you. This is the general lot of God's people. Has tribulation eome on you suddenly, and found you altogether unprepared for it, and is it this eireumstance that renders it so irksome and oppressive to you? Either you have not diligently perused, or firmly believed the words of Christ; for doing so, the misery, arising from surprise and disappointment in referenee to trouble and calamity eoming unexpeetedly, could not have been yours. Can any language be plainer than this, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."

2. In the season of tribulation, the words of Christ direet the mind to effectual sources of eonsolation. Unhappy they on whom tribulation eomes quite unexpectedly, and who have nothing then to which they can have recourse for relief and eomfort, but themselves and friends. Human fortitude and patience, indeed, and friendship, whieh is the balm of life, may do mueh to soothe and support the soul in adversity; but ineomplete and of short duration will that relief and eomfort be, if the heart is a stranger to the consolations of the gospel. It is the word of Christ alone that can enable us to bear tribulation either with comfort to ourselves, or to the glory of God. Adversity's awful form will seare away from the breast that heavenly guest, peaee of mind, if it is not introduced, maintained, and cherished by the faith of the gospel. Without light, comfort, and aid from above, our peace in the time of tribulation must be interrupted and destroyed. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his ery, when trouble cometh upon him?"

Now the words of Christ suggest to us those considerations, whieh are admirably caleulated to maintain and promote peace of mind, even in the very season of tribulation, or of complicated and great distress. They teaeh us, that all our afflietions eome from that God who made us, and has a right to do with us as seemeth good in his sight; that they are richly deserved on aecount of our sins; that God has a graeious design in afflieting us—to teaeh us heavenly wisdom, the exeeeding sinfulness of sin, the vanity of the world, and our need of Christ—to make us partakers of his holiness, and to prepare us for the heavenly rest; that the same God, who is our God in the time of health and prosperity, is also our God in the time of trouble and adversity; that he rests in his love, and is as willing as able to help us in time of need; that all things shall work together for our good; that God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will eorrect us in measure; that there is enough in the new covenant, in its preeious promises and administration, to bear up and comfort any afflieted Christian; and, that the Hearer of prayer has himself furnished us, in the time of affliction, with sueh prayers as the following:—"Be mereiful unto me, O God, be mereiful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the snadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these ealamities be overpast." "The troubles of my heart

are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and pain; and forgive all my sins." Thus in God, in his love, power, and faithfulness, afflicted Christians, taught by the words of Christ, find comfort in the time of sorrow, a shelter from every storm, and strength to surmount every difficulty.

In the day of battle, there is nothing that tends more effectually to support and animate the warrior than the recollection of the heroic deeds of those who have fought and conquered before him. Recollecting these, he scorns to yield; he presses forward, and seizes on the palm of victory. The words of Christ inform the Christian in the season of tribulation, how he is compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses; how, in all ages, they endured with patience the ills of life; how they loved not their lives unto the death, and overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony; and not only so, but how the Captain of Salvation himself fought, bled, and conquered; is exalted to his throne, is wearing that bright crown, purchased by the price of his blood; and how from that glorious throne, he beholds with pity and approbation his faithful followers struggling against the full host of their enemies, and says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The Christian, seeing that he is compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lays aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset him, and runs with patience the race that is set before him; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith.

3. The words of Christ teach us that the time of our warfare and suffering is but short. Experience teaches us that our life cannot be long. We see our friends and neighbours around us, after the lapse of a few years, dropping into the grave, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest; and we cannot be foolish as to think that we are destined to struggle with the ills of life beyond the usual period of the life of man. Thus experience tells us that all our present tribulations will soon come to an end. But it is the gospel alone that teaches the Christian, that all his sufferings of every kind are to be confined to the short span of human life. *In the world* ye shall have tribulation; but no where else. As if the Saviour had said, very soon shall you, my disciples, have finished your course according to the will of God; then all your tribulations shall come to a perpetual end, and immortal joy shall succeed. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Such were the blessed prospects which the words of Jesus set before his disciples, and which they still set before all his true followers. Nothing is better calculated to maintain and promote peace of mind in the season of trial, than the blessed hope which the Gospel inspires. What sorrows and pains would we endure, and with what patience and cheerfulness, if we knew that they were to last only for a day; that they were to be succeeded by long years of health and joyfulness, and that the endurance of them for that short day was necessary to prepare us for the enjoyment of such blessings? The period of the Christian's sufferings in this world is only a day, nay, a moment; and these sufferings are not only to be succeeded by, but are wisely appointed to prepare him for an eternity of blessedness. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Why then, Christians, should the tribulations of life greatly move you, or disturb your peace? They can last only for a few years at most, which, compared with eternity, are nothing. Soon shall the heart cease to ake, and the eye to shed tears. It is now almost two thousand years since the disciples were completely and for ever released from all the tribulations of the world, and were introduced into the joy of their Lord; and only a few short years have to elapse till all the disciples of Christ present, even the youngest not excepted, shall be discharged from this warfare, and be singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. One hour in the presence of Christ will make you to forget all the tribulations of the world, unless the remembrance o. them shall tend to promote his glory, and to enhance your joys. Is it, then, a time of tribulation with you? "Lift up your heads and rejoice: for the day of your redemption draweth nigh."

From this subject, learn to rejoice in all your tribulations, This is, indeed, a very difficult lesson: so much so, that none but Christ can teach it, and none but a true Christian can learn it. But to learn it is possible; for we hear Paul saying, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." And that you may learn to rejoice in tribulation, consider well the grounds of Christian joy which the gospel exhibits, and your personal interest in Christ; that it is your duty to rejoice in the most distressful seasons; that you thus glorify God by acknowledging his justice, submitting to his will, and trusting in his mercy; that you thus, in the most effectual manner, recommend the religion of Jesus to the attention and reception of all around you--for it appears most amiable and excellent in the life of an afflicted but cheerful Christian; and that you thus take the best method for alleviating your tribulations, and shortening the period of them; for whenever that God, who does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, sees that affliction has produced in his children the peaceable fruits of righteousness, he will turn away his anger, and comfort them.

If you would have peace in Christ, while you have tribulation in the world, make yourselves familiarly acquainted with the words of Christ. How well fitted they are to maintain our peace of mind amid the tribulations of life, we have already seen. But how can they afford us rich and lasting consolation, if we are ignorant of them, do not peruse and understand them, and know not how to apply them! Many a severe bodily pain we endure, because we know not the proper remedy, or how to apply it. Many a distracting doubt and fear the Christian has to suffer, and many a difficulty seems to be insurmountable, owing to the very same cause. Let the word of Christ, then, dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Read it daily, lay it up in your memories and hearts, seek grace firmly to believe it; and thus it will be a light to you in the time of darkness, joy in the time of sorrow, and strength in the time of weakness. David experienced it to be such. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me. Unless thy law had been my delight, I had then perished in mine affliction."

Never forget that you have to contend only with vanquished enemies. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Having spoiled principalities and powers, Jesus made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. He triumphed over the world and all the powers of darkness in his sufferings and death, as your surety. He now sits at the Father's right hand, till all his enemies be made his footstool. By the virtue of his blood, by the power of his Spirit, and by means of his word and ordinances, he will make you more than conquerors. The conflict may be sharp; it cannot be long. Nothing shall be able to separate you from the love of Christ. Neither the smiles nor the frowns of the world shall allure or terrify you from the paths of righteousness. Ere long the Saviour shall appear to receive you unto himself; that where he is, there ye may be also. Then the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. These things, Christians, I have spoken unto you, that in your Saviour ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer: He has overcome the world. Amen.

DOCTRINE OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

The doctrine of a particular Providence is founded both upon reason and the Scriptures.

Reason and true philosophy never attempt to separate God from his works. We must own him in the sky to hold the planets in their respective orbits; we must own him in the earth, and in the seas, to keep them within their proper bounds, and we must own him through the whole system of nature, to support and maintain that gravitating force which gives consistency and stability to all material things. Reason tells us, that it is not probable that the Creator of the universe would forsake that world which he had made; that it is not probable that a Being, possessed of infinite perfection, can be an idle and unconcerned spectator of his own works.

But our chief evidence for this doctrine rests upon revelation. Mankind obtained early notices of the divine superintendence, by peculiar interpositions. In the history of the Old Testament, we have an account of the loss of paradise by sin; of the banishment of Cain for the murder of his brother; of the translation of Enoch, as the reward of his righteousness; of the wickedness of the old world, and its destruction by the deluge, Noah and his family only excepted, who, by the eminence of his piety, found grace in the sight of God to become the father of the new world. When this new world revolted from God, and ran into idolatry, we see Abraham called out to be the head of a mighty nation, which grew up and flourished, by a series of the most wonderful providences; governed by laws of God's own appointment; with promises of protection and blessing, so long as they should be obedient, and threatenings of punishment and destruction, if they fell off to serve other gods; which in the event were punctually verified. This was a visible and a standing evidence of a governing providence. The doctrine was thus established upon a higher authority than reason, and upon better evidence than the light of nature. God revealed himself to men as the Governor of the world, the avenger of the wicked, and the protector of the good. But although in administering the affairs of the universe, the object of Providence should be to depress the bad and to favour the good; yet an exact retribution of rewards and punishments was none of the ends of his administration in this scene of things. This would have defeated the plan of his providence, and superseded the necessity of a day of judgment. Nevertheless, he would frequently interpose to punish signal wickedness, or reward illustrious virtue. Thus, in the early ages of the world, he did often miraculously interpose to let the nations understand that he took notice of their righteous or unrighteous deeds; that he had power to vindicate the honour of his laws; and to make examples whenever it was requisite, for the correction and reformation of men. Miraculous interpositions were not intended to be permanent or perpetual; yet the providence of God was not to cease. Accordingly, he took care to inform us, that what in the first ages he had done visibly, and by miracles, he would do in the latter ages by the invisible direction of natural causes. The Scriptures are so full of this notion, that it would be endless to be particular. You may read the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, where you will see all the powers of nature summoned as instruments in the hands of the Almighty, to execute the purposes of his will—where you will behold them commissioned to favour the good with national prosperity, with domestic comforts, with safety from their enemies, with fruitful seasons, with a numerous offspring, and with an abundance of all blessings; commissioned to punish the wicked with national distresses, with indigence, with slavery, with destructions and molestations of every kind, by war, by famine, and by all sorts of diseases. From all which, the plain inference is this, that the most common and most familiar events are under the direction of God, and by him are used as instruments, either for the hurt or for the good of men.

How this particular providence operates, may, in some degree, be conceived by us. Man, in his limited sphere, can take some direction of natural causes. You can direct the element of fire either to warm or to consume; the elements of air and water to cherish and to annoy. Does not that power, then, in a more illustrious manner, belong to God? Is it not as easy for Him, think you, to give laws to the tempest, where to spend its force; to direct the meteor flying in the air, where to fall, and whom to consume? Are the elements and subterraneous fires bound up? He can let them loose.

Are they broken loose? He can collect them as in the hollow of his hand. And all this he performs, without unhinging the general system, and without any visible token to us, that he is at all concerned, though in truth he is the effective agent. In like manner, we may comprehend, in some measure, how God may direct, not only the motions of the inanimate and passive part of the creation, but also the determinations of free agents, to answer the purposes of his providence. The hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord, as much as the rivers of water. This does not in the least destroy the freedom of human actions. Every one knows that the acts of free agents are determined by circumstances; and these circumstances are always in the hand of God. The dispositions and resolutions of men are apt to vary, according to the different turn or flow of their spirits, or their different situations in life, as to health or sickness, strength or weakness, joy or sorrow; and by the direction of these, God may raise up enemies, or create friends, stir up war, or make peace. Take, as an instance, the history of Haman. That wicked man had long meditated the destruction of Mordecai the Jew, and rather than not satiate his vengeance upon him, would involve the whole Jewish nation in utter destruction. He at last obtained a decree sentencing this whole people to the sword; and the day was fixed. In this crisis of their fate, how was the chosen nation to be delivered? Was God visibly and miraculously to interpose in favour of his own people? This he could have done; but he chose rather to act according to the ordinary train of second causes. He, who giveth sleep to his beloved, withheld it from Ahasuerus, the monarch of Persia. In order to pass the night, he called for the records of his reign. There he found it written, that Mordecai had detected a conspiracy formed against the life of the king, and that he had never been rewarded for it. By this single circumstance, a sudden reverse took place. Mordecai was advanced to honour and rewards; the villany of Haman was detected; the decree fatal to the Jews was revoked; and the nation of the Jews was saved from instant destruction. In like manner, in the history of Joseph, and other histories of the Old Testament, you see the most familiar events made instruments in the hand of God to effect the purposes of his will.

There is then a particular providence. The arm of the Almighty, reaching from heaven to earth, is continually employed. All things are full of God. In the regions of the air, in the bowels of the earth, and in the chambers of the sea, his power is felt. Every event in life is under his direction and control. Nothing is fortuitous or accidental. Let me caution you, however, against abusing this doctrine, by judging of the characters of persons from their outward circumstances. It is to be remembered, that the present life is not a state of recompense, but a state of trial; consequently, men are not dealt with in outward dispensations according to their true character. The goods of nature and of providence are distributed indiscriminately among mankind. The sun shines, the rain falls, upon the just and the unjust. It is a dangerous error, therefore, to judge of moral character from external condition in life. This was the error of Job's friends; this the foundation of the censures they cast against this excellent person, and for which they were reproved. The intention of the Book of Job is, to show the falseness of that supposition, by representing the incomprehensible majesty of God, and the unsearchable nature of his works. Many instances in Scripture confirm the truth of this observation. Who, that saw David reduced to straits, wandering for refuge in the rocks and dens of the wilderness, would have believed him to be the prince whom God had chosen? Who, that beheld Nebuchadnezzar walking in his palace, surrounded with all the pomp and splendour of the east, would have believed him to be the object of divine displeasure, and that the decree was gone out that he was to be driven among the beasts? Who, that beheld our Lord in the form of a servant, would have believed that he was the Master of Nature? LOGAN.

"THE ANGEL AND THE SPIRIT."

[We, in a former number of the Scottish Pulpit, called the attention of our readers to this splendid production, and now give an additional extract from its pages.]

Angel. Then be it for a moment only use.
Lo!
Around our path the Hallelujah rings,
And when the skies are clear why came a cloud?

Spirit. Gloomy, and drear, and dull, I see it all;
The very room in which my soul forsook
Its worn and frail clay tenement. Yet burns
The sickly taper, as for weeks it burned,
While waking from my unfreshful sleep,
I gazed on its lack-lustre, whose pale ray
Made even the darkness desolater far.
There sits my—she who was my wife, the loved
And lovely, fond and faithful ever proved!
On one side is the cradle of my babe,
Heedless, around his mouth a dreamy smile;
And on the other the repulsive shell
Of clay this soul inhabited.

Angel. No more—
O! look no more. Behold the gates are shut
For ever on that vista. Things of Earth,
So evanescent in their nature are,
That, measured by infinitude, they seem
Dwarfed into nothingness; and ocean's self
Is like a drop of rain,—what then the woes
That for the tiny term of month or year
Seem poison in the cup of human life!

Spirit. Farewell, farewell! O! may the dews of Heaven
Restorative, be shed upon your hearts,
And form a healing balm! O! may ye know
How worthless are the things most prized by men;
How poor and paltry are the gems and gauds;
How miserable and mean the aims and ends
Which lure the multitude; and may ye feel,
Amid the sunshine of terrestrial pride
And power, which throw deceptive halos round,
That all is vanity, save moral worth,
Sublimed by pure religion. In this faith,
And by this faith upheld, the storms of life
Shall round you rave, unheeded, and your feet
Shall through the fiery furnace tread unscathed,
Nor on the day of reckoning, from the flock
One be found wanting. Weep ye not for me:
Knew ye my blessedness, ye would not weep.
The tears that flow were well shed for yourselves.
Blessings be ever on you! Fare ye well!

Angel. 'Tis past: all earthward thoughts are swept away,
As dew-drops by the sun-illumined east;
Doubts are engulfed in blessed certainty,
And hope is now possession. Pass we on
Through chambers brighter than the morning far,
When rose tints on the glaciers seem to make
Of earth an Eden. Pass we on and on.

Spirit. O! Angel bright! while we are sojourning
Above the starry regions of the skies,
And when the sun and moon, scarce visible,
Hold their mysterious course beneath our feet;
Tell unto me thy name, and whom of all
The Heavenly hosts, God's goodness hath appointed
To be my leader to His blest abode!

Angel. Whom, welcome stranger, thinkest thou I am?

Spirit. That thou art not the Prince of Angels, Michael,
Well I opine; for he, 'tis said, doth bear
A something in his carriage so commanding—
A dignity divine—an awful grandeur,
And a celestial majesty of aspect,
Which check familiarity's approach.
Thou art not he, fair angel, but thou art
Gabriel, the king of harps, perchance, or Raphael,
That condescending spirit, whose bland words
Adam was glad to hear; or thou may'st be
Abdiel, famous for fidelity,
Who erst the host of rebel angels left,
Returning to the bosom of his God.
Thou sure art one of these, celestial guide!
For such immortal brightness, such divine
Unutterable expression, and such love
Within inferior natures never dwelt.
Celestial spirit! Son of God! thou art
Among the highest!

Angel. Say rather, 'mong the lowest, for the thrones
Of Gabriel, Raphael, and Abdiel, are
More lofty, in their grandeur, far than mine—
A thousand and ten thousand angels sit
Above me; and my harp, that fills so sweet
Thine untuned ear, is, among other harps,
As slight as is the sound that follows after
The dancing sunbeam, in comparison
With the immortal music of the spheres.
My splendour, which thou sayest bedims thy sight,
To other higher splendours is as darkness—
No brighter in their presence, than the star
Of dewy eve before the noontide sun.
O! chosen one! thou hast a glorious feast
Before thee, when even I, one of the meanest
Of the angelic hosts to thee appear—
So clad with glory, so invested with
The light of immortality. But now
We are approaching fast—two seraphim
In shining robes before the portal wait,
To give thee welcome. Them dost thou behold!

Spirit. I see a mighty entrance afar off,
Its gates of glittering adamant open stand,
Its golden columns tower in middle air
Beyond the reach of sight; before it glide
Two glorious figures, girded like the sun—
I cannot gaze upon them.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT CRAWFORD, Irongray.
SERMON by the Rev. WALTER M'GILVRAY, Glasgow.

THE MARTYRS' GRAVE;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ROBERT CRAWFORD,

Minister of the Parish of Irongray, Dumfries-shire.

PREFATORY.

Soon after entering on the pastoral charge of this interesting parish, I felt a strong desire to meet with my people, where the faithful of the Lord, in "the days of trouble, rebuke, and blasphemy" had found a breathing place and a sanctuary, that, in their devotedness to the cause of truth, we might read our own degeneracy, and feel the kindlings of a holy emulation. For a time I did not see how the object could be carried into effect, consistently with the great moral purpose I had in view. The excitement which such an occasion was likely to produce, appeared to me unsuitable to the sacredness of a Sabbath; and the solemnity which the whole scene was fitted to inspire, would, I was afraid, be either indistinctly felt on an ordinary day, or be soon dissipated. Happily an opportunity occurred, when both of these obstacles seemed to be removed, of which I did not hesitate to avail myself. The church was under repairs—we were meeting for divine service in the open air—a day of fasting had been proclaimed by the Assembly. In these circumstances, I announced to my own people, and to them alone, that we would meet for the purpose of humiliation at the Communion Stones, "where erst prayer was wont to be made." The day came—the weather proved extremely favourable. Some of the more aged and infirm of those under my charge were there. Many listened to the sermon and joined in the service, who, in other circumstances, would have devoted the day to business or amusement. The greatest stillness prevailed—every jarring sentiment was suppressed for a time. One feeling seemed to pervade the assembled multitude, even admiration of, and gratitude to the men who had so firmly struggled, and so nobly fallen in the cause of truth and freedom. Whether the impression was in all the cases evanescent, or in some salutary and lasting, God knoweth. The day which is rapidly approaching will reveal it. If this feeble effort to follow up what was then spoken, and to revive the purity and devotedness of the "olden time," be in any measure blessed, my object will be gained, and my labour abundantly rewarded.

IRONGRAY MANSE, *12th Nov.* 1835.

"*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*—REV. ii. 5.

We may view these words as addressed to the members of the Ephesian church, either in their individual or collective capacity. If we view them in the former sense, then the state from which they had fallen must obviously mean "the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals;" the holy zeal which marked the period of their conversion to the faith; that period when, like the first fruits of the Jewish increase, they were holiness unto the Lord. If we view them in the latter sense, then the state from which they had fallen must obviously mean a purer age of the church; times of lofty daring, deep humility, meek endurance; fervent prayer-seasons, such as those described in the preceding context, when minister and people bent their energies in

promoting the common salvation; frowning upon them that were evil; rejecting, with becoming indignation, every false claim to apostleship; hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, even those who turned the grace of God into licentiousness; and labouring, without fainting, for the testimony of God and of his Christ.

These states were worthy of being held in constant and grateful remembrance. They stood as distinctly out from the rest of their history as this hallowed spot from the surrounding scenery. (See Note A.) And they were eminently fitted to pierce them with a sense of their degeneracy—to rouse them from their spiritual slumber, and to animate them in the pursuit of all that is pure and lovely, and of good report.

Viewing the words before us in either sense, and more especially in the last, they are as applicable to the pastors and members of our own, as to those of the Ephesian church. "We have left our first love," we have fallen from the devotedness of our persecuted fathers. We have reaped the fruit of their labours without inheriting their spirit, or imitating their faithfulness. Though we have arisen from our deep sleep; though we have swept away dangerous heresies; though we have infused new vigour into the almost paralysed hand of discipline; though we have restored those rights to the Christian people, in the formation of the pastoral union, which had too long been denied them; though we are making vigorous efforts to bring the outcasts of our own population within the fold of the Redeemer; though we have gone forth on missionary enterprise, even to distant climes; and though we are alive, as the observance of this day indicates, to our manifold deficiences, we are still far from what we have been, and far from what we ought to be. I feel, therefore, that I am following out the purposes for which a day of humiliation was appointed, in meeting you here, where we are forcibly reminded how much has been done and suffered in the cause of the Redeemer, and that I am adhering closely to the spirit of my text in calling upon you to survey the cloud of witnesses with which we are encompassed; to think on the storms that have passed over them, and to review their character so bright with "the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope."

Praying that the Holy Spirit may render his own word profitable for reproof and correction, and may dispose us to remember from whence we are fallen, to repent, and do our first works. I entreat you to contemplate in the first place:—

I. Their holy fortitude. There is no need to enter into any detail of the sufferings to which the faithful of that age were exposed. They were written in indelible characters on the hearts of our fathers. They have furnished them with themes both for reflection and converse, of entrancing interest. They have called forth our earliest and deepest sympathies. They have been sung in touching strains by the bard, and narrated with singular minuteness and fidelity by the historian. The land is every where strewed with memorials of them. So long as "these stones," or the tombs of the martyrs remain, they cannot be altogether forgotten. For resisting spiritual despotism; for asserting the absolute supremacy of Christ as head of the Church; for adhering to that form of worship which they believed was in strictest accordance with the word of God; for carrying on the work of reformation, which had been so nobly begun, they were driven from their homes; they were robbed of their property; they were, in many instances, shut out from the sympathies of their kindred, so that they could not receive even a cup of cold water from their hands, without involving them in their fate. They were scattered through all places in "that dark and cloudy day." Nor were these their greatest privations. The Sabbath returned without bringing them repose, or calling them to prayer, for then the enemy was abroad, keenest in pursuit and fiercest in havoc. The house where they and their fathers worshipped was closed, or an alien presided there, from whom they could derive no edification, and with whom they could hold no communion. Their temple was the desolate moor, the deep forest, or the lonely glen. Even there they were not permitted to eat the bread and drink the water of life undisturbed. Their service was often fearfully broken—their spiritual food dashed from their lips, and their little band dispersed. Few again met after that hurried and troubled parting. Some were dragged to imprisonment, others consigned to instant death. "Still none of these things moved them." "They held fast the profession of their faith without wavering." "They feared not what man could do unto them." And their fortitude was certainly far remote from that which is the effect of enthusiasm or insensibility, or mere constitutional temperament. They did not needlessly brave the arm of power; they did not rashly provoke the malice of their adversaries; they did not blindly rush upon death; they saw and would gladly have avoided the danger that beset them, and when concealment or escape was no longer possible, when the hour of their extre-

mity came, they chose death rather than life, leaving those who were dear to them upon the Lord; breathing a spirit of forgiveness; praying for relief to the oppressed and desolate church, and displaying, in their dying hours, such serenity of joy as if "angels had ministered to them in their agony," or their souls had been enraptured with the view of the "King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off." (See Note B.)

Surely in the light of their holy fortitude, we should read, with confusion of face, our own base timidity. We have been valiant for the truth, but it has been in the company of the faithful; we have maintained a profession, but it has cost us nothing; we have been martyrs in our different spheres, but it has been to false shame. How often have we concealed our sentiments in the presence of those who, we had reason to fear, would charge them with absurdity, or treat them with contempt and aversion? How often have we practically disowned them, by acquiescing in unscriptural opinions, complying with foolish customs, joining in vain amusements, countenancing sneers against the good, shunning religious conversation, neglecting to acknowledge God in our families, or failing to lift a decided testimony to the truth in times of cold indifference or avowed infidelity? Who can estimate the fatal consequences of such sinful and dastardly policy? It quenches every lofty and generous aspiration in ourselves; it ensnares the young, the weak and the inexperienced; it lulls the impenitent and the unbelieving into deeper and deeper security; it breaks down the distinction between the church and the world, and contributes more than any thing else, perhaps, to the maintenance and diffusion of errors, both in doctrine and practice. Oh! that we would remember from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works. Is. li. 7, 8, 12, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou that shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass."

II. In the second place. I entreat you to contemplate their deep devotion.

In proof of their devotion, we need not travel beyond the spot where we are now assembled. Here they raised the voice of prayer and of praise; here they listened, like men under sentence of death, to the message of salvation from their beloved pastor; (See Note C.) here they devoted their infant offspring to the service of the Redeemer, consoling themselves with the thought that he would "carry them in his arms," perfect praise out of their lips, shield them in the hour of peril, and conduct them safely to glory; here they celebrated the ordinance of the supper, that ordinance which ever has been, and ever will be dear to the church; that ordinance which was so peculiarly fitted to pour light on the mysterious events that were befalling them, to nerve them for resistance, to fill them with peace, to bind them indissolubly together, and to make them regard "all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord." Realize, for a moment, the whole scene, when they met for these purposes on this lonely moor. What a contrast to that which is now before us. They had watchmen on these heights, to whom ever and anon their eyes were turned; they had tales of deep distress in their ears; they had defenceless or desolate homes behind them; they had a rapacious and lawless soldiery around them; they had imprisonment, tortures, and death in full array before them. "In their patience, however, they possessed their souls." Their perilous situation served only to detach them more effectually from earth, to unveil "the fulness of God" more clearly to their view, to bring future blessings closer to their heart, and to infuse a tenderer and a holier tone into their song of praise.

In their fervent devotion, we may read most distinctly our own criminal indifference in the service of God. We may not have openly profaned the Sabbath; we may not have preferred anything, lounging in idleness, engaging in worldly employments, travelling for amusement, meeting with sinful associates, paying or receiving visits, to the worship of God; we may not have deliberately forsaken the assembling of ourselves, as the manner of some is, nor treated with marked contempt the dying command of Christ; but have we loved the gates of Zion? have we relished the preaching of the truth? have we prized the discoveries of the gospel? have we valued the stated return and the pure administration of ordinances? have we been really desirous to taste and see that God is gracious? have we prayed for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem; do we bear any resemblance to the captives of the Jewish church, from whose heart no lapse of time, no change of scene, no depths of privation, no species

of ridicule or of scorn could efface the remembrance of Zion; or to the persecuted of our own, who, in hunger and thirst, in watchings and fastings, in cold and nakedness, the spoiling of their goods, and the loss of all things, called upon the name of the Lord, clung to the service of the Redeemer, and felt that a sense of his presence and love converted the wilderness into an Eden, cast alike into the shade the joys and sufferings of the present time, and came upon their wounded and fainting spirits like "rain upon the mown grass, and showers upon the parched earth." Alas! we have been inconstant and faithless worshippers. We have been almost utter strangers to heart-felt devotion, we have not unfrequently regarded the "pantings after God," felt by many in other days, and by many still in our own, as indications of an exited and distempered frame of mind. We have asked for spiritual blessings, and have not received them, because we have asked amiss, without any just sense of their surpassing value or their perfect freeness. We have listened with interest to curious expositions, and with cold indifference to "the glad tidings of great joy;" we have sought to have our fancies gratified instead of seeking to have our famishing souls fed; we have used ordinances as pillows on which to repose our aching consciences, or as stations on which to erect "a name to live," instead of using them simply as means for bringing us into a more intimate and endearing union with Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Well, then, may the remembrance from whence we have fallen pierce us to the heart—excite us to repentance, and dispose us to do the works for which our fathers were distinguished. O Lord, in the way of thy ordinances will we wait for thee. How amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord God of Hosts! As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

III. In the third place, I entreat you to contemplate their true patriotism. They were warmly attached to their political constitution. They guarded her bulwarks with unremitting care. They sought to preserve, in close and beautiful connexion, "the honours of the throne, the privileges of the parliaments, and the liberties of the people." They dreaded a relapse to popery, for this reason among others, that arbitrary oppression was sure to follow in her train. They bound themselves in the most solemn manner to maintain "religion in purity, and the kingdom in peace." When the law was violated; when their rights were invaded; when the constitution was shattered by the iron hand of despotism, they petitioned, complained, protested, endured, and—resisted only in the last extremity. (See Note D.) When oppression ceased; when their privileges were restored; when the ends of government were maintained, they forgot former wrongs; they rejoiced in their lot; they meddled not with those who were given to change; they cheerfully co-operated in every measure for the public good; and, in the hour of danger, proved themselves to be the sternest and most devoted patriots. The excesses here and there committed; the spirit of fierce republicanism in some rare instances exhibited; the "excommunication of the king and his adherents," by one or two men of inferior note, are easily accounted for, and do not affect in the smallest degree the loyalty of the great mass, or of their most distinguished leaders. (See Note E.) These, however, are not the grounds on which we rest their chief claims to genuine patriotism. They did not lean upon "carnal confidences." They never forgot that the Most High presides over the destinies of nations, making the devices of the people of none effect; keeping the feet of his saints, and putting out the lamp of the wicked in darkness. They acted upon the principle that the stability of their country did not depend on the extent of her freedom, the excellence of her institutions, the wisdom of her councils, the splendour of her conquests, or the magnitude of her resources, but on the prevalence of spiritual knowledge and moral purity among all classes of her population. They regarded as her sorest evil the load of guilt that was pressing heavily upon her. They dreaded as their deadliest foes her abuse of mercies, her contempt of judgments, her profanation of ordinances, her injustice, uncleanness, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. They mourned over them; they fervently supplicated mercy for them, and they took the most effectual means in their respective spheres to suppress it. They endeavoured, "according to their social stations and callings, that every parish should have a minister, every village a school, every family a Bible, and every place of power and of trust filled with men of christian conversation, approven fidelity, and known zeal in the cause of God."

When we contemplate them in this point of view, are we not forcibly reminded how we have fallen? Are we not loudly called

upon to repent? Have we not preferred civil to religious privileges? Have we not attached far too much importance to political changes? Have we not prosecuted them in an impatient and reckless spirit? Have we not in various forms manifested a contempt of authority, both supreme and subordinate? Have we not selected men to fill our places of trust for their brilliant talents or their political views, apart altogether from their religious principles or their moral feelings? Have we not overlooked the "causes of divine wrath," even the multitude of our sins, and been averse to prayer and fasting on account of them? Have we not contemplated without any painful emotion the spiritual death in which a vast portion of our countrymen are involved? Have we not been indifferent to the diffusion of that truth which is alone fitted to renovate the heart, and to "heal the wounds of a bleeding state?" We are ashamed and blush to lift up our faces unto thee, O our God. We have taken counsel, but not of thee; we have covered with a covering, but not of thy Spirit. We have gone from mountain to mountain, and forgotten our resting-place. We have trusted in man, and made flesh our arm, and departed from the Lord; and therefore might have been made like the heath in the desert, that shall not see when good cometh. It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

IV. In the fourth place, I entreat you to contemplate their unalterable attachment to the Word of God and the principles of the Reformation.

The ground on which they opposed the innovations in government and worship, then sought to be introduced, was the broad and solid one; that in their view they were contrary to the Word of God; that no human power could alter or subvert what the great Head of the Church had appointed; and that to yield in this matter would be to commit treason against their spiritual king, to relinquish the right of private judgment for which their fathers had struggled and bled, and to pave the way for their utter prostration, both as Christians and men.

They might be wrong in concluding that any particular form of ecclesiastical polity was prescribed in the Word of God. (See Note F.) They might not stay to discriminate between prelacy and popery. They might mistake the abuses for the necessary evils of the system they opposed. They might be blind to the zeal, the purity, the meekness, the rich and varied attainments for which some of the prelates of that period were distinguished. They might misapprehend the motives, and unintentionally mar the usefulness of those who acquiesced in the indulgence or accommodation. They might have imperfect notions of religious toleration, and when in power, might be unwilling to grant that freedom to others which they claimed for themselves. Assuredly, however, they were right in "obeying God rather than man;" in maintaining the spiritual supremacy of Christ; in asserting liberty of conscience, and in struggling to the last rather than violate these obligations, or relinquish these privileges. We should, therefore, sink every other feeling connected with their history in grateful remembrance of what they have achieved for us, and in an earnest desire to imitate their zeal; because they "sowed in tears, we now reap in joy."

How strikingly does their conduct in this respect contrast with our own! We have abused our religious liberty; we have cherished a spurious liberality. We have tacitly acquiesced in, or openly defended the false and very dangerous doctrine that our religious views are comparatively of little moment, provided our life, that is, our outward conduct, be correct. In the measures of public, and the intercourse of private life, we have been regulated more by a regard to what is useful than what is good—what is expedient than what is right—what is agreeable to a false and debasing philosophy, or the shifting opinion of the age, than to the dictates of eternal truth. We do not bring what we read, and hear, and do, to the touchstone of the word, and the consequence is, we are carried about with every wind of doctrine; we are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; we know nothing of the "sweet peace and the sure walking," which is the uniform result of abiding simply by the law and by the testimony; we imbibe an unchristian spirit, and persist in unchristian practices. Justly might our candlestick have been removed out of his place; justly might the light that is in us have set in utter darkness. Having walked in the light of our own fire, and in sparks of our own kindling, justly might we have been doomed to lie down in sorrow. Oh! that we may remember from whence we are fallen, and repent and do our first works. Oh! that we may henceforth employ the liberty bequeathed to us by our persecuted forefathers, in rising superior to the fear of man and the trammels of authority; in trying the spirits whether they be of God; in digging deep into the rich and exhaustless mine of divine truth; and in steadily adhering to every thing which the Lord our God requires of us, despite the opinion that

may thereby be formed of us, or the disadvantages that may thereby accrue to us. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy or vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. "My son, if thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart unto understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

V. In the last place, I entreat you to contemplate their practical godliness. In those days the grand theme of preaching, and the frequent, the delightful subject of meditation was the rise, progress, consummation, and effects of the mediatorial work of Christ; in other words, the doctrine of the cross—that doctrine which God himself has in every age of the church delighted to honour, and which forms an ever-welling and exhaustless spring both of peace and purity. Of such preaching and such hearing, practical godliness could not fail to be the result. With the cross full in their view, and engraven on their heart, they could no more deliberately persist in any sin, either of omission or of commission, than the man who was rescued from a wreck could deliberately rush back into the deep from which he had escaped, and within which his companions lay entombed. In absence of all proof to the contrary, then, we may fairly assume, that their whole character, under the influence of evangelical truth, has invested with a shining light, a vital warmth, a holy fragrance, and a strict consistency. Happily, however, we are not left to inference merely; we have abundant evidence of the fact. Hear the testimony of an eye-witness, whose veracity has never been questioned: "In many places the spirit seemed to be poured out with the word, both by the multitude of the sincere converts, and also by the common work of reformation upon many who never came the length of a communion. I have lived many years in a parish where I never heard an oath, and you might have ridden many a mile before you had heard any. Also you could not for a great part of the country have lodged in a family where the Lord was not worshipped by reading, singing, and public prayer. Nobody complained of our church government more than our taverners, whose ordinary lamentation was, their trade was broken, people were become so sober." (See Note G.)

These times of moral purity passed away. The minds of men were gradually corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Elegant preaching was substituted in the room of faithful dealing with souls. Morality was too often enforced apart from evangelical motives. The week-day labour of the pastor in numerous instances ceased, or was gone through in a hasty and heartless manner. "The love of many waxing cold, iniquity abounded." "We had a name to live, but were dead." Again there has been a shaking among the dry bones. The spirit seems to be breathing upon the slain. There are distinct intimations of a brighter day—a coming season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The hearts of the pastors and the hearts of the people are moved as "the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." The doctrines according to godliness hold a far greater prominence in our preaching, and are beginning to exert a more decided influence on our lives. Still there is a sad want of vital godliness. How often is Christ preached in appearance, and *ourselves* in reality? How often is love upon the lip, and enmity or cold indifference in the heart? How often are we high in profession, and low, miserably low in practice? How often can the scorner single out individuals amongst us in language like the following:—See these men—they talk about repenting, believing, and doing every thing to the glory of God; they dispute about points of faith; they are strict in the observance of religious forms; but when you follow them into the different walks of life, they are as unsanctified in their tempers, as selfish in their spirit, as grasping in their dealings, as immoderate in their enjoyments, or as fond of splendour and amusement as the gay or the sordid votary of the world. Let them fight about their mysterious dogmas; we will adhere to the precepts of morality. Many of whom I have told you before, and now tell you weeping, are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly, who glory in their shame, and who mind earthly things. We have fallen far from the practical godliness of our covenanting forefathers. What covetousness, what deceit, what intemperance, what conformity to the world, what neglect of the spiritual well-being of our families, what want of christian fellowship, what feeble attempts to arrest the progress of sin and error, what seeking of our own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ! The Church may be in danger; but it is, we apprehend, from within. If we remember not from whence we are fallen; if we repent not to give God the glory; if we do not strengthen the things which remain that are ready to

die; if we do not contend for the faith, and labour and pray for the advancement of that kingdom which consists in righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost, we have reason to fear that we will be delivered into the hand of the spoiler; that the glory will depart from us; and that not one stone of the house which was reared by our fathers in troublous times, and often brightened by the presence and enriched by the grace of God, will be left upon another that will not be thrown down. If, on the other hand, we covet the best gifts, and do the first works; if in doctrine we seek to be incorrupt, and in practice pure; if we keep the word of the Redeemer, and deny not his name, he also will keep us from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth. Our Zion will stand alike beautiful and firm—the glory of the kingdom, the joy of many generations, the place from which the light of life streams, and the water of life flows over the land. Around her will be seen as her defence chariots of fire, and horsemen of fire. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth. Turn us, again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and so we shall be saved. Be not wroth, very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see we beseech thee; we are all thy people. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Amen.

NOTES.

Note A.—The highest part of the Parish of Irongray is the hill called "Bishop's Forest," which rises somewhat abruptly from the Cairn or Cluden, and forms a splendid back-ground to the beautiful and well cultivated valley beneath. On the southern side of the "Forest" there is an extensive hollow, flanked on the west by Cornlee, and on the east by Skeoch Hill, with a natural opening from the south. Towards the centre of Skeoch Hill, on the inner side, where there is a platform of considerable extent, the communion stones are situated. They consist of what may be called two tables, with a passage between them. Each table has two rows of seats in distinct preservation. At the head there is a small cairn, which was obviously used as the table for the elements. A few yards to the south, a stone of an oval form is to be seen, with two separate circular cavities, that admit the arm to the elbow, which held, according to tradition, the water for baptism. In the front of the stones, towards the "Forest," the ground rises gradually, forming a kind of natural gallery, where the congregation could hear the sermons and addresses that were delivered, and witness the whole solemnity. The nature of the ground, and the precautions that were taken, by planting watchmen on the heights, rendered the spot peculiarly secure. Any attempt to surprise them was almost sure to be defeated. Once, and only once, do we read of their being surprised, owing to a thick mist which had overspread the hill, and prevented the watchmen from perceiving the approach of the soldiers. It is said, that on this occasion, the two martyrs, Edward Gordon and Alexander M'Cubbin, were taken, who sleep side by side near the kirk of Irongray, on the spot where they were murdered. It will be seen, however, from a subsequent note that I prefer the account given of them by Wodrow, whose information, in regard to all the events of that period, was "*singularly minute and correct.*"

Note B.—I do not mean to affirm that all who perished in the struggle of that period "died in the faith," and are now before the throne, holding the palm of victory in their hands. Many of them, however, gave full proof "that they knew whom they believed," that they had drank deep of his spirit, and that they were, indeed, "ready to be offered." In this class, I think, we may rank the men whose bones are in our keeping—the martyrs of Irongray. "Having been surprised (according to Wodrow) in Lochinkit muir, by Captain Bruce, they were conducted to the Bridge of Orr, where the Laird of Lagg was violently pressing the oath of abjuration on the country people, and from thence to Irongray, whither the party were going, and hanged upon an oak tree near the kirk, at the foot of which they were buried. When at the foot of the tree, one of them (Alexander M'Cubbin) was asked if he had any word to send to his wife? He answered, I leave her and the two babes upon the Lord, and to his promise, a father to the fatherless and husband to the widow is the Lord in his holy habitation. When the person employed asked him forgiveness. Poor man, I forgive thee and all men, thou hast a miserable calling upon earth! They both died in much composure and cheerfulness. The spot where they are buried is close to the Cluden, on a small rising ground within a clump of trees.

> "There now in peace sweet rest they take,
> Once murdered for religion's sake."

The flat stone which records their names, their death, and the cause in which they suffered, has of late received a handsome enclosure. To defray the expense of erection, a sermon was preached, and a collection made, near the spot. The sermon, which was afterwards published, is the pru-

diction of my talented and esteemed friend, the Rev. George Barnside of Terregles, and is marked by his usual power and eloquence.

Note C.—The communion seems to have been dispensed here to the greatest number during the summer of the year 1678. The Rev. John Welsh, who had been compelled to abdicate his charge several years before "for non-conformity to abjured prelacy," presided on the occasion, and was assisted by Mr. Blackadder, Mr. Semple, Mr. Arnot, and others. We may judge of the interest with which his people would listen to his instructions, receive his admonitions, and join in his prayers from the sorrow which they felt when he was first forced to leave them. The whole scene, as described by Blackadder, brings forcibly to our recollection the parting of Paul with the elders of the Ephesian Church. "It was with great difficulty," says Blackadder, "he got from among them, who were almost distracted, and cried ruefully with tears. But he being resolute, would not be detained, and after two or three of the ministers had kneeled down and prayed, he got to horse, the people still holding him. The minister and he rode quickly through the water to win from among them; many, both men and women, ran on foot after him, and followed on the road a good space, with bitter mourning and lamentation."

He was the grandson of the famous John Welsh of Ayr, and the great-grandson of the Scottish Reformer. The mantle of these great men seems to have fallen upon him, and no small portion of their spirit to have been bequeathed to him. Though he escaped a violent death, he was in labours as abundant, and in privations as oft, as any of those who sealed their testimony with their blood. After leaving his flock, we find him in the city, teaching from house to house; on the mountains preaching to the "suffering wanderers," after sleepless nights; at chosen and suitable stations dispensing to thousands the bread and the water of life; in the camp healing divisions, and taming the impetuosity of the more fiery leaders; and on the field of battle lamenting the dire necessity that forced him to arms, yet periling his life in the cause. Besides these things that were without, the care of the whole church came in some measure upon him. Still in the midst of all his labours and wanderings, his own flock were uppermost in his thoughts, and dearest to his heart. He hastened to them as often as he could. Braving every danger, he appeared frequently in the midst of them, opening the Scriptures, preaching Christ, dispensing ordinances, doing the whole work of an evangelist, and serving the Lord with all humility, and with many tears and temptations which befell him by the lying-in-wait of his adversaries. After Bothwell, he went to London, and there died on the 9th of January, 1681. See a short, but excellent narrative of his life in the Scots Worthies.

Note D.—If the cause which justifies resistance to rulers on the part of their subjects must be (as laid down with great precision and truth by Dr. Campbell, in his admirable sermon on the duty of allegiance) *important*, public, and understood by the community to be such—then unquestionably that of the Covenanters comes under this description. They formed the great body of the nation. Their rights, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical, had been grossly violated. A form of church government and worship had been forced upon them, which they abjured. The most revolting excesses were committed. All constitutional means of redress had failed. Had they quietly succumbed, far greater evils would have been entailed upon them than those which flowed from resistance. It is one of the clearest cases of exception from the general precept of non-resistance that can be conceived. At the same time, it can never be too carefully kept in mind, that resistance is a "last and desperate remedy."

Note E.—The disowning of the authority of the king, and the excommunicating of his adherents at Rutherglen, Sanquhar, and Torwood, were condemned by Mr. Welsh and the great body of the Presbyterians. He abhorred all revolutionary schemes, seeking simply a redress of grievances. He wore arms first of all in his own defence, or rather to intimidate those in pursuit of him, and to deter the soldiers from acts of wanton barbarity on small and defenceless bands. He never seems to have planned any thing like an open and systematic resistance. The rising in which he was first and last engaged was, as every one knows, unpremeditated, forced upon him and the leading men among the Covenanters, and deplored by them, as an extraordinary and painful measure, which the merciless oppression of the times and the invaluable interests at stake, could alone justify.

Note F.—The divine right of Presbytery or Episcopacy is now virtually abandoned. We adhere to the former, because founded on the word of God, agreeable to the constitution of the primitive churches, fitted for spiritual edification, and suited to our peculiar habits and circumstances. An enlightened Episcopalian adheres to the latter, exactly on the same grounds. And instead of instituting invidious comparisons between them, or blindly defending them, or endeavouring "to extirpate either," our great object should be to remedy all the abuses incident to both.

Note G.—I have given the passage from Kirkton, as quoted by Dr. Burns in his excellent Dissertation prefixed to Wodrow's Church History, a work (the Dissertation I mean) that evinces deep research, great vigour of thought and expression, and a truly covenanting spirit.

[For a more detailed account of the sufferings and faithfulness of the Scottish martyrs in the cause of their Divine Master, we beg to refer our readers to the enlarged edition of "The Scots Worthies," which Mr. M'Phun had the merit of bringing before the public. This edition, to which we refer, is by far the best of this most extraordinary work that has ever appeared. It is enriched with a preface by the late Mr. M'Gavin, the author of "The Protestant," "The Protestant Reformation Vindicated," &c., and throughout them are numerous illustrative notes, from the pen of one of the ministers of

the Scottish Church, which add greatly to the value of the work. All who hold sacred the memory of the deceased martyrs, owe Mr. M'Phun a deep debt of gratitude for putting them in possession of so excellent an edition of a work that must ever be dear to every Scotsman's heart. "He is," as an English writer remarked, "unworthy the name of a Scot who can be indifferent to the story of these immortal champions." Should any of our readers, therefore, not already have possessed themselves of this work, so highly held in general estimation, we beg to recommend to them this improved edition of the Scots Worthies. It is the only complete edition of it, and contains many additional lives to those generally in circulation.—Ed. Scottish Pulpit.]

OUR SALVATION A GREAT SALVATION, AND THE SIN AND DANGER OF NEGLECTING IT;

A SERMON

BY THE REV. WALTER M'GILVRAY,

Minister of St. Mark's Church, Glasgow.

"*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.*"—Hebrews ii. 3.

The chief design of the epistle before us is to prove the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, in order thereby to prove the infinite efficacy of our Lord's atonement. In the foregoing context the Apostle commences by pointing out the superiority of Christ to angels, which constitutes one of the steps of his great argument, and having, both from the direct testimony and legitimate scope of scripture, established his position, he proceeds at once to apply the subject, and to press upon the conscience the practical influence of the doctrine, which he had so clearly discussed, and so satisfactorily proved. He calls upon the Hebrew converts to recognise the importance of the gospel, in the supreme dignity of its author. He contrasts it in this respect with the Mosaic economy, and argues that if the old covenant, which was only delivered by the ministration of angels, was, notwithstanding, so sacred that every violation of its requirements, was surely, and severely punished; how much greater would be the guilt, and how much sorer the punishment, that must follow a neglect of the gospel which had been promulgated by one so far superior to angels, and which, therefore, ought to be received and observed with a degree of reverence, proportioned to the exalted character of him who condescended to proclaim it? "Therefore," says the Apostle, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation."

In farther discoursing from these words, we shall

I. Adduce some reasons to show why the salvation here spoken of is called a great salvation.

II. We shall consider who they are that may be said to neglect it.

III. The sin and danger of such neglect.

In compliance with this arrangement, we remark that the salvation spoken of in the text may be considered a great salvation:

1st, *On account of the dignity of its author.* This argument we have already referred to, as that which the apostle chiefly urges in the context, and on which he grounds his admonition against the neglect of it. It is a well known fact—a fact familiar to our daily experience, that objects or actions are frequently estimated, according to the quality of the individual concerned in them. If that individual be exalted in rank or character, the eminence of his station gives weight to his deeds, independent of their intrinsic worth, insomuch, that things in themselves unimportant, derive consequence and consideration from his being concerned in them; and things of acknowledged excellence acquire a value increased according to the eminence of the person from whom they proceed. How great, then, must the salvation here spoken of—in itself the best and the noblest of blessings—appear, when we consider the supreme dignity of its divine author—when we remember that he is "Jehovah's fellow," that he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, far above all angels, and principalities, and powers, and every name that is named in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth—that he is (as the sacred writer declares in the preceding chapter) "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," and that in virtue of his unrivalled and eternal pre-eminence "all the angels of God are commanded to worship him." Such, and so

exalted is the author and finisher of the Christian covenant; and the salvation, therefore, which he interfered to effect, and which he condescended to proclaim, may well be regarded as "a great salvation."

But this salvation may be called great, 2d. *On account of the magnitude of the means which were employed for its accomplishment.* You need not be told how much the value of a thing depends on the time, and labour, and expense that are required to procure it. What costs us but little exertion to obtain, we deem but of little consequence; but what demands the intervention of great means before it can be compassed, is always on the contrary, proportionally prized as important and valuable. If this be the case, we cannot but admit that the salvation of the gospel may very justly be denominated "great;" when we think of the *mighty preparations* that were made for it, and the *stupendous price* at which it was ultimately purchased. If we trace it to its origin, we find that it was first planned in the counsels of eternity, —that it occupied, if we may so speak, the attention of heaven's supreme administration, ages before this scene of things was called into existence. And if we look back to the time when it began to be unfolded, we find that its commencement was coeval with the fall, and that the arrangements of Providence from that period downwards, were directed with the view of securing its accomplishment. The promises that were made to our first parents, and again, at sundry times, repeated to the patriarchs, formed the earliest announcements of this momentous design. The selection of the Israelites from among the rest of the nations—their bondage and banishment in Egypt—their wanderings in the wilderness, and their subsequent establishment in the promised land; were all ordained for the purpose of promoting its development. Their civil and religious institutions—their rises and reverses as a people—their peculiar privileges, and their equally peculiar punishments—their kings, their priests, their prophets, their records, and their miracles—in short, the whole scheme of their civil and ecclesiastical polity, and the entire scope and character of their national history, were constructed and controlled for the advancement of that one grand purpose to which we have referred. They were all designed "to prepare the way of the Lord," to bring round events to that foreordained crisis—to that fulness of time, (as the Scriptures term it,) at which the salvation here spoken of was to be actually wrought out, and openly and universally revealed to the world. Such long continued and important preparations—preparations that affected the fate of many kingdoms, during many thousands of years, and preparations which the providence of God watched over with peculiar intentness, and which not only ordinary means, but also frequent and mighty miracles were employed to keep in their proper train—such preparations were of themselves enough to show that the object intended to be answered by them must surely "be great." But when we consider the manner in which this object was more immediately attained; these preparations, mighty and momentous as they were, sink into almost utter insignificance. When we think that for the purpose of effecting this salvation, he whom we have contemplated as the Son of the Highest, the image of his person, and the partner of his throne, required to descend from the right hand of power—to lay aside for a season the glories of divinity—to leave the lands of immortality, and to live as a despised and rejected man in this bleak world of darkness, and wickedness, and wo; and when we remember that "after being found in fashion as a man," after the unmeasured humiliation to which he stooped, by exchanging the bliss of heaven, and the light of his Father's love, and the adorations of those glorified spirits "who circle the throne rejoicing," for the miseries of earth; for the temptations of devils, and the execrations of devilish men—when we remember, I say, that in addition to all this he—the Lord of life—"humbled himself so far as to become obedient unto death, even the accursed death of the cross;" we may truly and emphatically say, that a salvation so ancient in its origin, so long and laborious in its development, and that required so mighty a sacrifice to secure it, is indeed "a great salvation."

But this may be called a great salvation, 3d. *On account of the importance of its object,* which is to rescue immortal men from the guilt and misery in which their disobedience has involved them. Of the depth of that guilt and the amount of that misery no finite mind can form any adequate conception. Indeed, we can only touch, as it were, upon the more prominent particulars connected with the subject, for we attempt to calculate in vain the full extent of those evils which sin has entailed upon us. It has, in the first place, brought us *under the curse or condemnatory sentence of God's violated law,* for the Scriptures assure us that "The wages of sin is death," and "That cursed is every one that con-

tinueth not in all things that are written in the book of the Law, to do them," and inasmuch as all the children of men, without exception, have transgressed the will of God, so are they all by nature under the wrath of God—under the malediction of Him who made them, and "in whose hands their breath is, and all their ways." But sin has not only brought them into this dread and perilous predicament, but it has also *prostrated and ruined their moral powers* to such a degree, that "the very imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are evil only, and evil continually." But such is the darkness in which our minds are enveloped, that we fail to realize in our own condition the representations of Scripture with regard to it; for things can only be rightly estimated by comparing them with their contraries. Depravity can only be properly understood by contrasting it with purity; but so low and so limited is our sense of what is pure that we cannot attempt to judge by it of what is polluted. As well might the man who has been born blind delineate the beauties of a landscape, or the hereditary slave describe the sweets of liberty, or the habitual profligate portray the pleasures of religion, as those who are born in sin and nurtured in iniquity discover the depravity which they do not *feel*, by the contrasted light of excellence which they do not *comprehend*. The very fact, however, of our incapacity fully to perceive the moral pollution with which we are infected, is one of the very strongest proofs of its deep and unreached inveteracy; and if we were gifted with the power of a spiritual discernment—if the eyes of our understanding were once opened and enlightened, we should see such an exhibition of the dire malignity of sin, and of the degree to which it has defiled and defaced our moral nature; that we should start back with dismay from the picture of foul deformity which our own hearts presented. Some may consider such views as the dreams of a morose and mystical religion, and exclaim against them as unfounded and fanatical; but I appeal for their truth to the only standard of religion—I make my appeal to the Bible!—and there I find that these views are confirmed by the recorded experience of God's people in every age of the church. Witness the horror of Job, when at the presence of the Lord "the scales fell from his eyes." The moment the light of the divine purity flashed upon his conscience, that moment he cried out, with a feeling of intense abasement, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes!" Witness again the case of Isaiah, when similarly circumstanced; when in vision he beheld Jehovah "on his throne, high and lifted up," and heard the sublime song of cherubim and seraphim resounding throughout the temple, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," the sense of his own deep sinfulness overcame him to such a degree that he exclaimed, in the very midst of the august scene that was passing before him, "Wo is me! I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts." But without multiplying examples farther, we would merely observe; that if men themselves, who, at the best, are but dimly enlightened, perceive such a degree of guilt and defilement within their own hearts as makes them cry out with amazement and alarm; how utterly polluted must they not appear to Him "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and who knows precisely the full measure of demerit and destructiveness that is connected with sin. The verdict which he has passed upon it shows, in a most impressive light, the deep turpitude that he attaches to it. We know that he has denounced against it the extremest punishment that his own power can inflict, or that man's powers can sustain; the punishment of death—of death temporal—of death eternal. Oh, what untried and unfathomed depths of malignity must there not be involved in *that* which could induce a God of *infinite mercy* to pronounce a sentence of everlasting ruin against his own creatures, or that could *justify* a God of *infinite righteousness* in passing so dire a doom! Surely, then, the salvation which delivers us from the wrath of God, from the defiling and destroying dominion of sin, and from the unutterable horrors of eternal perdition, may most emphatically be styled "a great salvation."

But 4th. This salvation may be called great, *on account of the importance of its end*. That end is not merely to rescue man from the wrath, but to restore him to the friendship of God; not merely to protect him from hell, but to promote him to heaven. Indeed, the term salvation is very frequently employed in scripture to express the deliverance of the believer from the sins and sufferings of time, and to his admission into the bliss of immortality. Of the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of that bliss, we can form but a very faint and far-distant conception, "for eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for these who love him."

The descriptions which the inspired word contains of the joys that await the spirits of the just made perfect, and of the glories of that kingdom which the great Redeemer has purchased and prepared for them, bright and glowing as they are, must fall infinitely short of the sublime reality; for *that* human language cannot express, and human thought cannot conceive. But, notwithstanding the lameness of language to portray, and the slowness of thought to apprehend the full splendours of that glorious scene, yet both are taxed to the uttermost in the delineations of the divine record, so as to justify the admiring exclamation of the psalmist: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O Jerusalem, thou city of our God." All nature is ransacked for images to picture out that "far off land" of mystery and magnificence. It is at one time represented us a *holy place*—a vast and venerable temple, whose pillared aisles and lofty dome ring with the choral swell of arch-angelic adoration; at another it is described *as a rich and mighty city*—the metropolis of the spiritual universe—where sits the court, and stands the throne of the King of kings, where the dwellings are all palaces, and the citizens are all princes. Again it is set forth under the figure of a *banqueting house*, where high and happy guests, clothed in white robes, keep joyful festival, and regale themselves with the viands of immortality "at the marriage supper of the Lamb." It is now presented to our view as *a field of victory*, on which, crowned with triumphal wreaths and bearing in their hands the palms of conquest, are seen the faithful soldiers of the cross, who, following the Captain of their salvation, have fought, and struggled, and overcome. Then it is disclosed to us *a scene of soft and tranquil repose*, where the toil-worn have ceased from their labours and the weary are at rest, "where they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither doth the sun light on them nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne feeds them and leads them to living fountains of waters, and God wipes away all tears from their eyes." Such are some of the varied aspects in which the sacred writers endeavour to represent the unseen realities of heaven; but, as we have already said, these representations can convey but very dim and inadequate ideas of that august scene; for who can describe—what angel's tongue can justly portray the home and the dwelling-place of God—that place which the utmost power of the Almighty is exerted to beautify, and which all his benignity is called forth to gladden and to bless? If nature herself present, as she often does, such prospects of surpassing loveliness—if even this bleak world, blighted as it is with the desolating effects of sin, can still exhibit such scenes of enchantment; when the sunshine of spring is spread upon its mountains, and the verdure of spring is resting on its vales, "when the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land," how loftier and loftier far must be the aspect of that "land of light," where no cloud ever darkens the sky, and no chilling blast ever desolates the soil? and if human life sometimes witnesses such glimpses of joy—if, like the night of northern climes, such bursts of intense gladness shine out for a moment from the midst of its gloom, O how unspeakable must be the rapture that is felt in that region of pure and unsuspecting love, where free from the fears of change, and from the possibility of decline, their joy flows on "like a mighty river," full, deep, and inexhaustible for ever and for ever. These, however, are only external and figurative delineations of blessings which, as being spiritual, must be spiritually discerned, and cannot by human language, which is the language of sinners, be fully or fittingly defined. And whilst, therefore, it is true that there is a local heaven, "a land of pure delight, where saints immortal dwell;" and whilst it is true that there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore to be found and felt there, yet the happiness that is reserved for the redeemed children of God arises from other and higher sources than those which are merely external, from sources of which these are but faint and figurative emblems. They consist in deliverance from sin: in deliverance from death; in deliverance from wo, and "in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and the salvation which effects all this—which places us beyond the reach of care, and crime, and sorrow—and which brings us "to dwell for ever with the Lord," and to live for ever "in the light of his countenance," may with peculiar propriety, be pronounced, "*a great salvation.*"

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. WALTER M'GILVRAY, Glasgow
SERMON by the Rev. DR. MITCHELL, Glasgow.

OUR SALVATION A GREAT SALVATION, AND THE SIN AND DANGER OF NEGLECTING IT;

A Sermon by the Rev. WALTER M'GILVRAY.—*Concluded.*

But we proceed as we proposed,

II. To consider who they are that may be said to neglect this great salvation. And here we do not mean to dwell upon the conduct of those who are the open and avowed enemies of the gospel, for they do not constitute the class of individuals to whom this part of our subject applies; neither does it apply—directly at least—to those who, however they may profess to believe in the doctrines of divine truth, yet evidence, by their habitual and profligate disregard of the divine will, that theirs is profession without principle. Such characters as these do much more than merely "*neglect*" the great salvation. The former despise and disbelieve it altogether; and the latter treat its requirements with practical contempt. Of these I would merely ask in passing, "what shall ye do when God riseth up, and when he visiteth what shall ye answer him?" "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?" But trusting, as we earnestly do, that there are none now present who have the misfortune and the misery to belong to either of these classes, we go on to point out the description of persons who are more immediately referred to by the language of the text: and these, we apprehend, are they who regard the great salvation *with lukewarmness and indifference;* who, if they do not actually oppose, yet do not properly appreciate it—who, so that they are guilty of no very flagrant violations of the gospel *precepts*, are satisfied to remain, for the present at least, without any interest in the gospel *promises;* and who, consequently, use no exertion to become acquainted with their nature, or partakers in their blessings. Great benefits, my friends, upon every principle of equity, should reckon upon great exertions being made for their procurement. But this principle, so reasonable in itself, and so regularly acted upon in the common affairs of life, seems to be very much discarded in reference to the things of religion; as if they either did not *deserve*, or did not *demand* its application. As to their not deserving its application, we trust that there can be no question about that. We trust that in setting forth the particulars connected with this salvation, the circumstances that entitle it to be called and considered "great," we have said enough to show you that it deserves, if ought in the universe of God can deserve, our most earnest solicitude, to secure an interest in its rich and eternal immunities. Compared with it how poor, how petty, how empty, are the perishable interests of time! Compared with it, what are the honours, the pleasures, the emoluments of life!—those glaring prizes that glitter so temptingly in the eye of the worldling, and

for which he toils so unweariedly, but which he finds in the end so "stale, flat and unprofitable." It has been well asked by one who knew the full import of the question. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Alas! the world, though we could gain it all, would prove but a precarious possession. The stamp of vanity is impressed upon its fairest offerings, and vexation of spirit is closely connected with its most satisfying enjoyments. But even although it were not so—although its promises to the hope were not so cruelly broken to the heart as they uniformly are, yet soon the heart and flesh will fail, and the hopes that have their origin on earth shall be buried with their owner in the grave. There the prospects of the worldling must for the present terminate, and of all the possessions which he harassed his brief span of existence to secure, he can get nothing away, except the narrow coffin that imprisons him, and the shroud that enwraps his lifeless remains—Wo to the forsaken sleeper if this was all that he wrought for!—if the world, from which his memory has vanished, was all that he tried to secure! for the time is coming when the trump of doom shall pierce with its startling summons "the dull, cold ear of death," and he will then awake to see the riches and treasures of the earth—the things which he prized so supremely, and for which he once laboured with such daily and exclusive devotedness, consuming in the flames of the last conflagration! and then, if not before then, will *he also* perceive the tremendous truth of the text, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And if, therefore, the interests of time, which afford so little real satisfaction now, and which shall ultimately be destroyed as things of nought, are deemed worthy of so much care and exertion—shall that salvation which is the only source of comfort here, and which involves the interests of an endless eternity hereafter, be considered worthy of less attention? or rather when the comparative importance of the two is rightly estimated—when they are weighed in the balances together, does not the one appear as "nothing and less than nothing, and vanity," when contrasted with the incalculable weight and worth of the other? If this then be the case, how earnest, and diligent, and laborious should we be in our attention to it! Ought not the desire to secure an interest in its blessings be the predominant feeling in our hearts, and the grand object of our lives?

But admitting, as we must, that the salvation of the soul deserves this degree of attention; the next question is, whether the gospel really *demands* it? Whether it is necessary that we should devote ourselves to the subject with such engrossing solicitude? It is necessary, at all events, that we should give it our *highest and most habitual consideration*, for we are told that it is "the one thing needful," and we are, accordingly, commanded *to seek it first*. Every thing else that is incompatible with it, we are required, at whatever sacrifice, to relinquish for its sake. The right eye must be plucked out, and the right hand must be cut off, nay, even our very lives "must not be counted dear to us," if they come between us and this. And with regard to *the degree of exertion that we are called upon to make*, we are directed to "strive," (or as the term may be more properly translated) to *agonize* "to enter in at the strait gate;" "to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure;" "to press (like the panting racer) toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus." Such is the demand which it makes upon our zeal and assiduity, and any thing short of this is so far "neglecting the great salvation."

But we hasten to consider in the

III. and last place, The sin and danger of such neglect. The Apostle demands, "How shall we escape?" The question is far more emphatic than any positive declaration on the subject could have been. It strongly expresses the utter impossibility of the thing—the utter hopelessness of any attempt to escape under such circumstances, and this will appear if we consider:

1st. *The folly and ingratitude that are implied in neglecting so great salvation.* Had it been a matter of minor importance—had it been a thing of less cost in its acquirement, and less concern to those whose interests it affects, then the guilt of neglecting it would be comparatively light; but to neglect *so* great salvation—a salvation which called forth in its contrivance the "manifold wisdom of God"—which was the subject of solemn covenant between the divine persons of the Godhead—which was so early in its announcement, and so long, and so momentous, and so marvellous in its development; a salvation for which angels were employed to prepare

the way; which prophets were raised up and commissioned to predict; which multitudes of miracles were wrought to promote; and above all, which the Eternal Son of the living God came down from heaven to proclaim, and died on earth to effect. When we reflect for a moment on the folly, and the blindness, and the gross ingratitude that would be involved in our neglecting a salvation so mighty and merciful, it may well be asked, "How shall we escape?"

But the impossibility of escaping, will appear still more evident when we consider:—

Lastly. *That it is the great, the only remedy provided for our deliverance.* If there were any other means by which we could be saved from the consequences of sin; or any other way by which we could be reconciled to Him in whose hands our destinies are placed, then we might have some reason for neglecting the remedy which is here prescribed; but assured as we are, on the authority of God himself, that there is no other foundation that can be laid, or on which our hopes can be built, except that which this salvation reveals. That there is "no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved," except the name of Him who is its author and finisher. If, in these circumstances, we neglect it, how shall we escape? On what can we rest a single hope of escaping? Do we imagine that God *will recede from his expressed determination* to punish those who obey him not, and who believe not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must remember that "God is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent. Hath He said it, and shall He not do it? Hath he spoken it, and shall he not make it good?" Do we think we shall be able to *withstand his vengeance, or to ward it off?* Hear his awful question, "Can thine heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the day that I will deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and *will* do it." Do we hope *that we shall elude his search*, or fly in our despair to some forgotten place, some dark and unvisited region of the universe where he cannot find us? Shall we "hide ourselves in the dens and the rocks of the mountains, and say unto the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." And can we so escape? "Whither shall we go from His spirit, or whither shall we flee from His presence? If we ascend up into heaven, He is there; if we make our bed in hell, behold He is there; if we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall his hand lead us, and his right hand shall hold us. If we say, surely the darkness shall cover us; even the night shall be light about us. Yea, the darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to him." How then *shall we, can we escape*, if we neglect so "great salvation?"

ON THE DUE IMPROVEMENT OF DOMESTIC BEREAVEMENTS;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOHN MITCHELL, D.D., & S.T.P.,

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"*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*"—2 Sam. xii. 23.

Such was the solemn reflection of David, upon the death of his infant son. The circumstances connected with this event are narrated, with much simplicity and brevity, in the preceding part of the chapter. They were in themselves striking, and they may prove exemplary, and instructive, to us.

The child, here spoken of, was the son "of her who had been the wife of Uriah," and whom David had espoused, after the commission of very aggravated crimes. For these, Nathan was sent by God to reprove the king, which he did in a most admirable and effective manner, surprising him, by a

parable skilfully constructed, into a confession of the atrocity of his conduct, and a denunciation of his own doom. At the same time, the Seer intimated the death of the babe, who had been the fruit of a connexion so extremely sinful. Children born in similar circumstances are frequently objects of offence to the parents, and their removal is welcomed as a relief, at once from a burden and from a disgrace. David, however, was too just, and too pious, to transfer the odium of his own trespass to his innocent offspring. Besides, this was the child of Bathsheba, who, it appears from the subsequent history, was his favourite spouse. It does not seem that this son had lived long enough to form a character, and, by his own dispositions, talents, and dutiful deportment, to have won for himself a high place in the affections of his father; but he had attracted the strong instinctive attachment of David, who, it sufficiently appears from his writings, and from various passages in his history, notwithstanding several transactions which might seem to indicate the contrary, was very tender-hearted. Indeed, every penitent, in proportion to the depth of his contrition, for which David was remarkable, must be so. Urged, then, by the powerful feelings of a heart by nature full of sensibility, and farther softened by divine grace, when the child fell sick, "according to the word of the Lord," David interceded, earnestly and perseveringly, for his life and recovery. The denunciation of Nathan did not, in the king's judgment, preclude such prayer; for he knew that, according to the spirit of the sixth precept of the law, he was bound "to use all lawful endeavours for the preservation of his own life, and that of others," particularly of one so near and dear to him. He had hope, especially as his sin was forgiven, that this punishment of it might also be remitted; and that the God of love and the Father of mercies would hear, as he had often done, the voice of his sorrowful prayer, reverse the sentence, and spare the child. Accordingly, he prostrated himself in the sick-chamber, with incessant supplication, and fasting, and sorrow. All, however, was in vain. The decree had gone forth, and was not to be recalled. The child died on the seventh day of his illness, perhaps of his life. Then David, whose soul had seemed hitherto to shun consolation, and who refused to admit any interruption of his prayer and humiliation; to the surprise of his servants, rose from the earth, anointed himself, changed his apparel, went into the house of God to worship, and afterwards, returning to his own house, asked for refreshment, and resumed the discharge of his ordinary functions. Struck with this apparently unaccountable conduct, so contrary to the usual demeanour of men in such circumstances, his servants could not avoid expressing their surprise; and David explained it satisfactorily in those two verses where our text lies: "While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." The general meaning of this reply obviously is, That, as long as the child was alive, and the event uncertain, he regarded himself as authorized to implore God that the fatal issue might be averted; but, when this had befallen, he felt bound instantly to acquiesce in the will of his heavenly Father, and to prepare thenceforth for his own death, which involved a departure into the eternal world, where he would rejoin his beloved offspring. The last idea contains the spirit of the text, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

What I propose, for the farther elucidation of this subject, (which, in its general and most obvious aspects, may come home to the case of not a few,) is, through divine aid,

I. To offer a few remarks, deducible from the preceding narrative;

II. To unfold the solemn views comprehended in the declaration of the text; and,

Lastly. To apply the interesting subject to appropriate, practical purposes.

I. We begin with offering, and briefly illustrating, a few remarks drawn from the foregoing relation, which is very affecting, and may be useful. And we observe,

1. That it is not sinful in any case (with a reserve of the divine sovereignty, which is always implied or expressed) to deprecate the death of dear friends and beloved children.

Hardly any case of exclusion can be conceived stronger than the one now before us. God, by the mouth of his prophet, had expressly denounced the death of this little one. But David interceded, it should seem long and earnestly, for his life, and did so unreproved. Though the very apposite

case of Hezekiah had not yet occurred; yet he acted upon the principle which justified that monarch in pleading for his own recovery, after sentence of death had been passed upon him also, and explicitly intimated to him. In both cases, you see that the instinctive yearnings of nature are not opposed to the spirit of religion. This contrariety, however, exists, and is cruelly cherished, to a great extent, among heathens. By them, in many regions of the earth, their children are exposed, or drowned, or buried alive, or sacrificed to cruel divinities, without remorse, and even without regret. Theirs is a superstition alike barbarous and impious. But Jehovah, "the one living and true God," hath all along proclaimed, and approved himself to be merciful and compassionate. He willeth not the death of any. Often, he has passed from the judgment deserved and denounced. And, always, he loves to spare life rather than to take it away, when this can be done consistently with his wise and holy purposes, with the good of his children, and the glory of his government. He permits, accordingly, our intercessions for all, even for the worst. He hath planted innocent affections in our bosoms, and he cannot be displeased with their legitimate exercise, in pleading for the lives and the comfort of those who are beloved by us, provided this is done in the faith of his mercy, and in submission to his holy will.

2. God is pleased, in the course of his adorable providence, sometimes to visit the iniquity of fathers upon their children, of progenitors upon their posterity.

You see a striking instance of this in the case before us. It was expressly, as the punishment of the sin of David, and doubtless of Bathsheba too, that this child, the fruit of their unlawful loves, was smitten. And such is the express language of the sanction of the second precept of the decalogue: "I the Lord thy God (saith Jehovah), am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." This, then, is a law of the moral government of God; and the infliction, we apprehend, is far more frequent and extensive than, without reflection and inquiry, we would be apt to imagine. You see it in the first sin of the first man, devolving, in consequence of covenant connexion, upon all his posterity. And it occurs in other cases, when no federal relation exists, or can be supposed to exist, and when the era of execution is far distant. The Amorites, as the descendants of Ham, were early devoted to destruction; but, as the permitted course of their personal provocations was not finished till many hundreds of years afterwards, we read that, in Abraham's day, their "cup was not full," and they were reserved to fall, in future times, by the sword of Israel. And our Saviour warned the Jews of that generation among whom he ministered, that "the blood of all the prophets and righteous men, which had been shed from the beginning of the world, would be required of them." Such visitations, however, fall only upon those that "hate God;" and, blessed be his gracious name! it is not *evil alone* that descends. *Blessings* also devolve upon the seed of the righteous, from age to age. For "God showeth mercy to thousands, *i. e.*, (as the contrast may seem to imply, confirmed by the correspondence of Ps. ciii. 17,) to a thousand generations of them that love him, and keep his commandments." If "he layeth up iniquity for the children of the wicked," he delights, especially, to treasure up grace for the offspring of the godly. There is thus, my brethren, an intimate and a most influential connexion betwixt parents and their children, for good or for evil, which by no means terminates with the death of the former, and which should powerfully deter them from sin, as well as irreligion, and impel them to holiness and piety. The sinner knows not what mischief he may do to those that come after him, even in an age the most remote; nor the godly what blessings he may diffuse, and perpetuate, among his descendants to the last generation of his race.

3. Prayer is the proper exercise of the soul, amid afflictions and bereavements, felt or feared.

"Is any man," saith James, "afflicted, let him pray." And to prayer David betook himself, on this very trying occasion. This pious exercise, in such circumstances, serves three excellent purposes among others. First. It is the appointed and appropriate mean of *averting the dreaded event*, if such be the will of the Almighty. The prayer of faith does wonders, and has often "saved the sick." Prayer, also, *soothes the soul amid suffering*. I knew once a daughter of Abraham, who had met with a trial of almost unexampled severity, since her two and only sons, affectionate and promising young men, had been smitten at once; and

w o, when the sad procession, which was to carry the dead bodies together to the tomb, began to move from the house, entreated the minister to pray with her; "for," said she, "I always feel my soul composed by prayer amid afflictions." In addition to these considerations, we may remark that prayer *obtains consolation and blessing from above*, under bereavements and sufferings. Moses lifted up his soul to God at the Red Sea, and the depth divided to open a passage for him and for the host of Israel, that they might escape from the rage, and vengeance, of the Egyptians. Jacob, alarmed at the prospect of meeting an incensed brother, cried unto "the angel who had redeemed him from all evil," and was delivered. Daniel prayed to God in the lion's den, and was rescued. Jonah raised his voice from the bottom of the sea, when "the weeds were wrapt about his head," and was cast forth upon dry ground. And our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, when his "soul was sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."

4. Humiliation and fasting are exercises specially befitting times of trouble.

To these also the afflicted monarch had recourse, at this time. It is to be feared, however, that in this age, even the godly seldom resort to them in similar circumstances; and others, alas! are more apt, amid afflictions, to betake themselves to the stupifying, or the inebriating potion; to guilty pleasures, or dissipating society: thus producing an oblivion of cares and sorrows, alike short-lived and sinful, soothing for a moment to the feelings, but deadly to the soul. No doubt, fasting has been abused in many cases, as we see in the history of the Jews, and of modern superstition. But what doctrine of revelation, or ordinance of heaven, or exercise of devotion has not been perverted? It is true, also, that outward abstinence of itself is no part of spiritual devotion, and of small avail; for "bodily exercise profiteth little," and may even degenerate into "will worship." Still, in such cases, it is natural; for the soul that is afflicted for its iniquities, or deeply grieved on other accounts, "abhors all manner of meat." Not only so, it is becoming, as well as dutiful, and, when proceeding from proper principles and accompanied by a suitable spirit, may be regarded as an acceptable sacrifice to God. And it is in many respects useful. It is one of the most palpable signs of inward contrition. It crucifies the flesh, and completes the mortification of the whole man. It is fitted to withdraw the soul from the overweening attractions, and influences, of earth. It helps us to subdue passion, by mortifying appetite. It conduces to spirituality of mind, and stability of holy purpose. And, when inspired by divine grace, it is an oblation to God of appetite, as well as of affection; of the propensities of the body, as well as of the attachments of the heart.

5. Submission to the will of God, under the loss of children or other bereavements, is the duty of all; and, when spiritual strength is ministered from on high, will be the attainment of the good.

David, on this occasion, as you perceive from the preceding history, reached an eminent degree of this exercise. Nor will others, who depend upon God, and seek resignation from him, be wanting in it. And it is a temper and conduct at once rational and religious. What, indeed, can be more wise, and becoming, and pious, than to commit without distrust and without repining, the disposal of all our connexions and concerns to Him, who cannot err, and who can never do us any wrong? Yet, alas! it is often otherwise; and a different spirit—unwise and unstable—is suffered to prevail. Do we not see very many refractory and rebellious amid the disappointments and disasters of life, especially when the trial is somewhat singular in its character, or aggravated by concomitant circumstances? Nay, does not the sufferer sometimes justify his fretfulness or murmuring, and say with Jonah, or at least seem to say, "I do well to be angry?" Against this temper of mind, so unseemly, so ungodly, and so injurious, let the afflicted and bereaved sedulously watch and strive. On the other hand, how honourable will it be to divine grace, if we are enabled to glorify God amid consuming fires; and are made, under afflictions however disastrous and irremediable, to adopt the resolution of the prophet, so just and yet so noble:—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice

in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."

6. The sanctuary of God is that place to which the bereaved mourner may, most aptly, resort.

The King of Israel, as we read, when his child was dead, "went into the house of God and worshipped." And Job, when he heard of those desolating strokes, which slew all his children, and swept away all his possessions, bowed the head, and adored. In like manner, Asaph, when he was "envious of the foolish, and saw the prosperity of the wicked," when his faith staggered, when he was about to renounce his religion and belie his experiences, went into the sanctuary, and there had the mysterious dispensation satisfactorily explained to him, and his troubled soul composed. And here in "the holy place of the Most High," it is still felt, especially under the present enlarged and liberal dispensation of truth and grace, that the afflicted finds instruction and consolation, in the establishment of his faith, and the elevation of his hope; that light is thrown upon dark providences, and strength is ministered for bearing great adversities; that life is seen to spring from death, and blessing to grow out of bereavement. In the mythological tales of ancient Greece, it is said that the altar of Jupiter was so happily situated, that no wind could blow upon it. And within the holy oracle around the mercy-seat of Jehovah, there is enjoyed a sacred calm. There is found every thing that is fitted to tranquillize the perturbed mind, to soothe the afflicted heart, in the time of trouble. "In the evil day," says the Psalmist, "thou wilt hide me in thy pavilion, in the secret of thy tabernacle shalt thou hide me, thou wilt set me upon a rock."

7. We should not only feel and cherish, but also exemplify submission to the divine dispensations.

So did the son of Jesse; for when apprized that his son was dead; he rose from the earth, anointed himself, changed his apparel, and went into the house of God to worship. It is unworthy of a Christian, of an heir of immortality, always to dwell in the shadow of grief, and to stay by the grave weeping. Joab did far worse things, than putting an end to the excessive grief of David for Absalom, which withdrew him from the exercise of his high functions, involved a censure upon the loyalty of his people, and endangered the stability of his government. Our grief may be excessive in duration as well as in measure; and it is always sinful, when it cools our hearts to the love and service of God, and unfits us for the discharge of the duties of life. "So I see," said one of the Society of Friends, to a lady who seemed to him to have mourned too much, and too long, for the death of a beloved daughter, "thou hast not yet forgiven God for the death of thy child."

Lastly. The conduct of the children of God under painful bereavements, may often appear strange to others, though it be founded upon the best principles, and be capable of being justified by the best arguments.

So did David's deportment to his servants after the death of his child; but you see that, in the text and context, he assigns the best reasons for it. And the godly still, amid similar circumstances, by their calmness and composure, by their resignation and cheerfulness, may excite equal surprise, and yet be capable of vindicating their temper and conduct no less satisfactorily. Are they tried with the loss of this world's goods, they know that they have, "in heaven a better and a more enduring substance." Are they aspersed in character, or injured, in interests, they appeal to "Him who judgeth righteously: their witness is within and their record on high." Are they bereaved of their children and friends? The former they have dedicated to God, and cannot retract the dedication, though he should be pleased to act upon it unexpectedly and painfully; and amid the removal of the latter, they have still one, the best of friends, and whose fulness comprehends all relations, "who sticketh closer than a brother." Do the comforts and connexions of time disappoint their fondest hopes, and leave their souls desolate; their reflections and emotions are only thrown, with the greater force upon eternity, where all that is truly estimable and delightful will be either gloriously replaced, or superabundantly compensated.

This leads us to the second head of discourse, under which we propose to unfold the views contained in the text itself, "I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me."

Now this explanation, given by David to his servants, in connexion with the death of his child, may be contemplated in the following lights:—

1. It is the sorrowful declaration of one,

who had just been bereft of a beloved son the only son of his mother.

Few trials in life can be more painful than this. Hard must be that heart which does not feel it, and feel it deeply. Unnatural must be that parent, who does not bewail it most sorrowfully. How doleful was that lamentation, which David afterwards poured forth over another of his sons, slain in rebellion, while he had others more dutiful children still alive :—"O Absalom, (he cried) my son, my son! would to God I had died for thee, my son, my son!" Above all, how severe the trial which Abraham was called to undergo, when he was commanded to offer up his son, his only son. Isaac. Trials very similar, though doubtless infinitely inferior to that mighty sacrifice, the greatest of all others, which the Father of mercies made for our redemption, when he "spared not his own son, his only begotten son," but gave him up to the death for us all.

2. The statement before us presents to our view a person, amid his sorrows, meditating solemnly upon eternity, and solacing his soul with this contemplation. This was the state into which the son of David had just entered.

If there be any thing calculated to throw our thoughts upon the world of spirits, or to make us feel our connexion with the eternal scene most closely, it is death, especially the death of a dear friend; for then the soul is softened, solemnized, and urged to think. And such serious anticipations, one might suppose, were in such circumstances unavoidable. But, alas! it is not so. Many, amid death, stay by the grave weeping; but never bestow a thought upon future existence. Even on the verge of a future world, and amid all the insignia which indicate that a beloved spirit has recently taken its flight thither;—amid the stillness of the death-chamber, the solemnities of burial, and the memorials of the cemetery, they contrive to shut out the thoughts of eternity. Now, this is neither wise nor pious. It is to stop short at the threshold, when we are called, by every thing around us, and ought to be excited by every thing within us, to enter the great building. It is to be engrossed with precursors, but to neglect the end at which they point, and to which they lead. It is to forget how near that dread being is into which one who, it may be, was "dear to us as our own souls," has just passed; and how soon we ourselves may be conveyed, or precipitated into it. It is to forego, and willingly to forego, that great and salutary influence, which the event is adapted, and was intended, to produce. On the contrary, a good man, and a true believer, will avail himself, as David did, of such sorrowful seasons and scenes, to place himself "under the powers of the world to come," and to hasten his preparation for "an endless life." And never, as an eloquent and original preacher, whose voice no more speaks on earth, once remarked, did Abraham appear more august than when sitting, at the evening of the day in the door of his tent, and meditating upon eternity! And, truly, that man, as another powerful thinker has observed, in whose mind the past and the future predominate over the present, is a more rational and intelligent being, than another whose thoughts do not take this wide range, but are engrossed with the present passing hour. And he, doubtless, is most of all a child of immortality, who is anticipating his endless existence; who is communing most with the world of spirits, and who loves to have his "conversation in heaven, whence he looks for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is enabled to subdue all things unto himself."

3. The intimation of the text is the utterance of one who is anticipating the hour of his own departure. "I shall go to him." There is but one way, as there is only one event, for all mankind. "It is appointed to all men to die." The paths of life, however much they may diverge from one another, are all concentrated in the tomb; and although they may be designed studiously to retreat from it, yet do they all lead incessantly thither. This is "the house appointed for all living." Man goeth continually, and inevitably, to his long home. We may not think of this fatal progress, we may be anxious not to mark it, nay, we may beguile ourselves, especially amid days of unbroken and luxuriant health, into a disbelief of the melancholy fact; but there can be no truth more certain, or more undeniable to a sane mind than this, that we are all travelling, day and night, without a moment's intermission, to this great rendezvous of the sons of men. And howsoever we be separated by our course of life, or by the stroke of death, we shall all meet in the grave, and lie down in the dust together. Then the parent shall overtake his child, and, peradventure asso-

ciated in place, have the melancholy satisfaction of reposing in the same cold chamber, and mouldering together into the same earth. Now, David was naturally led, when his beloved child had just left him, to think of his own departure, to anticipate his own last sleep in the common grave.

4. The bereaved mourner is here contemplating death as an irrevocable step in existence: "I shall go to him, but *he cannot return to me.*"

This consideration invests the last event with peculiar importance. In most other cases, if a mistake is committed, it may be rectified subsequently; if a wrong step be taken, it may be retrieved; if a loss be incurred, it may be repaired. But here all this is impossible. At death, the character is fixed, and fixed for ever; the soul, if lost, is eternally lost. And this is a view which also deepens sorrow. "O remember," says the plaintive mourner of Uz, "that my life is wind; mine eye shall no more see good. The eye that hath seen me, shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." No more shall the babe smile on our knee, or prattle in our presence. No more shall the youth entertain us with his adventures, or the scholar delight us with his acquirements, or the strong man with the feats of his strength, or the irradiations of his genius, or the powers of his eloquence, or the achievements of his heroism, or the traits of his excellence, or the aspirations of his piety. All, all are gone! Silent is the grave. Still and mute are the dead. Vacant are the places they once occupied, and frequented; or filled, and resorted to by others. Sorrowful and desolate are the bosoms on which they once leaned, the hearts they once caused to exult with joy.

Lastly. David is here anticipating a happy reunion with his beloved child, in a better world. Nothing less, doubtless, could have either satisfied his faith, or soothed his spirit.

We are not now to enter upon the inquiry, concerning the salvation of *all* children dying in infancy. On this subject, we apprehend, Scripture has given no decisive information, and where the inspired writers are silent, it is not our province to determine. This, however, is a question different from that which concerns the salvation of *the offspring of believers*. On the latter, we think, the Book of God has shed a pleasing light. Jehovah hath been accustomed, in tender mercy, all along to unite, in his covenant, believing parents with their seed. "The promise," saith he, addressing such, "is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off; even as many as the Lord our God shall call." And the children of prayer are the children of hope—those about whom the faith, and the aspirations, and the intercessions of godly parents have been exercised, with particular ardour and interest, from earliest life; especially those who, like Timothy, have been taught the Holy Scriptures, not without accompanying supplication, by pious mothers and grandmothers; those, above all, who have been trained up, by an extended course of christian tuition, carefully and prayerfully, in the way of the Lord; these, though called away in early life when they can say little or nothing of their views and feelings, are probably the children of grace, and the heirs of immortality. For "the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much"—the heart that goes out, thus vehemently, after them and their salvation hath, probably, been impelled by grace to aspire after this very thing. Jehovah never "said to the seed of Jacob, Seek my face in vain." And such is the ordinary issue anticipated in the declaration of inspired Solomon: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Meanwhile, christian parents, how consolatory the hope of meeting such again in the realms of life, and light, and joy! when "the small and the great stand before God." How delightful to receive and to recognise our little ones, now matured in the knowledge and in the grace of immortality, *as in part the fruit of our humble prayers, and the seals of our domestic ministry in the Lord!* And, especially, when all the good are gathered in, and all the children, of whom the kingdom of heaven is made up, are convened;—how transporting to associate with them, through eternity, in that blessed land, where God "shall wipe away all tears from all eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

From this subject we may learn what we have all to expect, in such a world as this. It is, that death will, sooner or later, invade our families, and snatch from us the dearest

objects of our affections. Indeed, the most intimate and tender relations of life are all constituted with this understanding, that they shall one day be dissolved. The parent must be severed from child, the husband from wife, friend from friend, and all of us from those that are dear to us as our own souls.

The views that we have been taking also admonish us, that parents *must* do much good, or much ill, of the most influential kind, to their children. Their personal graces, through the mercy of God, may descend; their particular vices, through the corruption of human nature, are almost sure to descend. The punishment of their sins in all probability, and not less surely the blessing promised to their good and holy lives, will devolve upon their posterity. Such, of either sort, is the inheritance usually assigned to "children's children, under the moral government of God." Let all parents, then, strive so to conduct themselves, that their memory shall be a blessing, not a curse, to those they leave behind; that those who are dear to them may derive only the most salutary influences from them; that "their good name may praise them in the gates," and that their children to the latest generation, "may rise up and call them blessed."

We are taught, again, what reflection the disappearance of others from this earthly scene should suggest most naturally to our minds. It is the thought of our own departure. Of this every death, and every opening grave, should remind us. Surrounded, then, by the dying and the dead, by the memorials of the things that have been, and the shadows of the things that are, let us familiarize ourselves to the consideration of our latter end;—let us anticipate that solemn period when we also shall go the way of all the earth, and be no more seen here below;—let us ask ourselves whether we are indeed prepared for the hour of our departure, and are graciously acquainted with that great and generous Being, who, "for this end, both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be the Lord of the living and of the dead."

Finally. Amid dissolving assemblies, and the disruption of the dearest connexions on earth,* let us think upon that period and that state, when all the family of God shall meet, not one lacking, and the congregation of the redeemed shall be convened never to be broken up. Happy, happy day! when all the good shall be reunited, never to part, never to sin, never to suffer; when David shall meet his infant son, from whom he was severed amid such anguish of soul; when holy parents shall meet their gracious children; when pious pastors shall meet their beloved people; when all shall meet those who were most worthy of their esteem and affections, and when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, when they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing being for ever done away:"—no "Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they are not;" no Jacob mourning his lost Joseph, and saying, "nay, but I will go down to the grave weeping for my son;" no David crying, I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me; and no saint or or servant of God lamenting the absence of even one that could have added to the blessedness of their heaven, or to the brightness of their glory.

* Delivered on the evening of a Communion Sabbath, and soon after the respected brother, whom the preacher was assisting, had lost his only son and child.

THE LOVE OF GOD CONTRASTED WITH HUMAN AFFECTION.

It must be obvious to all who consider the religion of the Bible, and who have leisure or learning to compare it with other systems, that it differs from them all in one most important respect. All other religions *profess*, more or less, to give us views of God, and of our relation to him, of the duties which we owe him in this life, and of the hopes that his promises afford us of hereafter. But the object of all this is to do something which may *dignify man*, which may exalt him in his own eyes, and make him think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Christianity is the only known religion that exerts its influence directly on the heart—that tells us that God loves man, and that therefore man's first religious duty is to love God. Not only do we find this great difference, but another, which is a direct consequence of this. Other religions fail not only in the object which they propose to us, but in the means by

which that object, such as it is, must be effected. It is utterly in vain to talk to us about the abstract qualities of the Deity; it will never affect our hearts, it will never influence our conduct. Men may go on preaching, and other men may go on listening for ages; but unless the religion that is preached to us affect us, and that deeply, we shall never be the better for it, though all the sublimity of the human mind was exhausted to paint a notion of the Deity, and all its eloquence was employed to describe the effect that such a notion should have on us. In one word, the difference between real Christianity and any other is this, that the latter tell us, in various languages, that God is to be *feared;* and Christianity, and that alone, teaches us that God is to be *loved.* In this comparison it might be easy, by quoting from antiquity, to show how little the love of God entered into the conception of other systems. One instance may suffice. An ancient philosopher, and far from the worst of the set, stoutly maintained that *it was impossible to love God:* the fact is on record, and the truth is indisputable. In the words of inspiration, he has met an ample refutation—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This then must be the religion that must be fittest for man. Our ears may be gratified by eloquent language, our feelings may be touched by pathetic description, our minds may be enlarged by lofty *themes;* but unless our hearts are affected, our religion is vain. Christianity alone affects the heart, and when that is truly, deeply stirred, our lives will be proportionably influenced, and only then. The declaration made in the above passage of Scripture is one of sovereign importance. Of whom is it declared that he loves us? Of Him whose power is omnipotence, whose nature is unalterable, whose love is everlasting. It must be obvious to us, on the most superficial view of life, that man was formed to cultivate an attachment with his fellow-creatures; and that without this, life is either a blank or a torment. We court the favour or the fondness of our fellow-creatures, from the first hour of life to the last—in infancy we cling to the nurse or the parent—in childhood we seek the friendship of our contemporaries—in advancing youth we pursue the illusions of passions—in age, weary of that folly, we are satisfied with cultivating the ties of blood, and please ourselves with the thoughts of sinking to rest pillowed on the arms of those whose infant clasp we have folded in prayer, and soothed by the consolations of those to whose infant tongues we have first taught the name of God, and the prayer in which his love has taught even children to hail Him as their "Father who is in heaven."

Thus dependent are we always on the love of our species; and yet how valueless, hollow, and perishing is their love, compared to that with which God hath loved the world! Man's love is always selfish: they love us for what they get, or hope they may get by us, for their passion, for their pride, for their interest, for their comfort—no matter for what, for *themselves always.* But God, the infinite God, for what can he love us, but for the infinite benignity of his nature? If ten thousand worlds of beings like us were created and annihilated in two successive moments, it could neither add to nor diminish his glory. He is infinitely happy in himself, he is infinitely glorious in his own perfections, if he deign to love us his love is disinterested, for to us he owes nothing, and from us what can he receive?

Again, the love of our fellow-creatures is temporal. However tender or fervent the ties we form here, whether the bonds of nature or of passion hold us, we know that there is a hand approaching that must break them, a hand whose touch nothing can resist. Parents must quit the fruit of their bodies, partners the beloved of their souls; whatever we take to have and to hold is dust in the hand that grasps it. Death stands by, a terrible witness to every mortal engagement, and decides on its termination at the moment we decide on its certainty. But there, where mortal love ends, and for ever, there the love of God begins; it begins in eternity, and never will end. *There,* on the very verge of that stage where all human relations leave us, where wife and child cannot follow us, except by their tears, there the love of God meets us, and meets us, unlike theirs, never to part. Well may the dying Christian, at any period of existence, apply to himself the words of the Psalmist, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then God taketh me up!" He does indeed take us up where those who love us best must leave us, and where we must part with them.

Lastly, human love is mutable, founded on circumstances; it will change with those

circumstances, whose change is incessant and proverbial. Those who love us for their own pleasure, will fly the moment their degrading motive is suspended, and it may be suspended within the hour. Those who love us for their interest will fly perhaps still sooner. All is mutability in human attachments; disease, misfortune, accident *may*—time certainly *will*—cool the warmest heart, and make what we lean on for support through life feel like the reed beneath the touch—we trust to it, and it bends. But this cannot be the case with the love of God. In life passion may betray us; nature may fail us, man may desert us—*man will*, but God *will not*. With Him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." It is his gracious declaration, that he hath so loved, and he "cannot lie, and will not repent:" "God is not a man, that he should repent."

Many more differences occur between the love of God to us, and that which our fellow-creatures may bear. Many may love us, and want the power to show it. The cold "God help you!" that we give to sufferings which we do not feel, and do not mean to relieve, and the warm "I wish I could help you," are equally ineffectual. They express something, no doubt, but they produce nothing; and they are probably those who wish us best, who can, by the necessities of life, do least for us. But this can never be the case with Him in whose hands the earth and all its creatures are as "the dust in the balance, or the drop in the bucket," who can give and who can "let him," who cannot want the power and does not want the will to bless us, and who will withhold from his people no "manner of thing that is good." Our fellow-creatures may love us to our injury; and the expression of the best feelings of our nature may be so perverted by prejudice, error, and accident, as to have upon us all the effects of the very worst. Affection may impel some to treat us with injudicious and importunate severity, and thus alienate the confidence it would have conciliated, and aggravate and confirm the faults it would remove. Affection still oftener prompts us to treat its objects with indiscriminate indulgence; flattering their passions, palliating their errors, and exaggerating their characters; and the most deadly hatred could scarcely give a more deadly proof of its enmity than this. But the love of God, which has solely our good for its beneficent object, can never mislead us, or dishonour Him. Secured by the immensity of his infinite perfections, no error can shade his vision, no cloud can intercept or distort the rays of descending mercy. He cannot err, and will not deceive. Thus infinitely glorious in its nature, extent, and operations, is that attribute of the divine character of which our text speaks. It has infinite power to display it, infinite beneficence to direct it; the soul is its object, and eternity the limit of its action.

If it were possible, that any thing could more highly exalt the great God than his expression of love to his creatures, it would be the consideration of the state of those who are its objects. "Ye love them that love you," saith Christ. Not always is it even thus in life; but it is at least certain that few waste their affections long on beings who return it with indifference, and still fewer on those who reject it with scorn and hatred. On the contrary, all the restraints of law, all the forms of society, and all the influence of religion, are insufficient to restrain men from giving a deadly expression of their hatred to their enemies. Here, then, as the Apostle exclaims, here behold we the love of God! "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet *sinners* Christ died for the ungodly." "His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. It is of His "mercy that we are not consumed;" and how is that mercy magnified, when he reveals to us—not wrath for our offences, but love, love to a world of guilty sinners, dead in trespasses, adverse to his holy nature, and hostile to his religious will. In contemplating the scheme of redemption, we seem to be perpetually ascending a graduated scale of divine mercy, and each step raises us higher in our conception of the divine munificence. That his mercy might be exalted by the dignity of the messenger, that messenger was his Son; his Son—one with the Father in effable union—partaker of a "glory which he had with him before the world was."

MATURIN.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT COOK, Clatt.
SERMON by the Rev. CHARLES HOPE, Wandell.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE CHURCH OF CLATT, ON THE 3D DAY OF JANUARY, 1836, FROM MATTHEW XXV. 1—13.

By the Rev. ROBERT COOK,
Minister of Clatt.

IN the parables of our blessed Lord there is always a literal and a spiritual meaning. In the beautiful passage which I have now read to you, the literal meaning is so obvious, that it must be unnecessary to employ a single word in its illustration. It will be sufficient to premise, that almost the whole of the particulars are taken from the usages that were prevalent in the time of our Lord in the celebration of marriage among the Eastern nations. But the hidden or spiritual meaning is most instructive and important. Of this passage two applications have been given, to one of which only we will be disposed to accede. By some, the whole procedure has been interpreted in reference to the final judgment. In accordance with this explanation, the period during which all "the virgins slumbered and slept," has been understood to denote the interval between death and the final judgment; and the absence of the bridegroom, represents the period between the ascension of Christ and his appearance on the judgment-seat. We reject this interpretation because we do not conceive it to be stamped with the impress of truth. It takes for granted, what is not in accordance with the scriptural testimony. It represents the human soul in a state of insensibility during the interval between death and the resurrection; and it takes away the sanction of an immediate happiness or misery after death; and it deprives the mourner for the departed believer of his most cheering consolation. We have then to seek for another meaning more agreeable to the mind of the spirit. And we think that no passage could be better chosen to represent the visible and professing church of Christ, to mark the distinctive features between the nominal christian and the genuine believer, and their relative states before God; to describe the uncertainty that hangs over the life of man; and to enforce the important duty of unceasing watchfulness.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

By the "kingdom of heaven," we are

to understand the visible church. The "virgins" represent the professors of the christian name, and their "lamps" denote the fair show of an external profession. By the "bridegroom," we are to understand Jesus Christ, the "head over all things to the Church," and that circumstance of the virgins "going forth to meet the bridegroom," betokens the apparent readiness of professing Christians to honour Christ. Thus far there is exhibited no visible line of distinction between the nominal and the true church of Christ. "All the virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom;" and between the pretended friends of Christ, and his devoted servants, there are often such lineaments of character as to bespeak the subjects of the same common Lord. Both are admitted members of his church by the same symbol of his grace; both frequent his ordinances by the same apparent devotion; both encompass his table by the same external marks of sanctity; both express the same zeal for the promotion of his cause, and both seem alike to look for salvation through his perfect righteousness and atoning death. "But they are not all Israel that are of Israel," neither are they all "in Christ" that are called after his name. For,

"Five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

And is it thus that the visible church is constituted? Does the number of believers and of mere formalists thus meet in equality? It comes not within the legitimate range of this parable to determine this point; and to the curious inquiry, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" we reply in the energetic language of Christ, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." But whence arose the marked distinction between the foolish and the wise virgins?

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them." To have "a form of godliness," but "to deny its power;" to have a "name to live," but to be spiritually dead; to "appear beautiful outward, as whited sepulchres," but "within to be full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." This is the character ascribed in the revealed word to the nominal Christian. His religion consists in an external profession that has nothing to do with the heart. Whatever he does is to be seen of men, while "God is not in all his thoughts." Whatever may excite the notice or command the praise of his fellow-mortals, forms the object of his zealous pursuit, while to the Christian's hidden life; to the unseen exercises of communion with God and his own soul; to secret prayer; to a ceaseless struggle with his spiritual foes; to every duty to which God and his own soul are alone privy, he is utterly a stranger. And whence arises this fearful delusion, this mistaking of the shadow instead of the substance, this resting in the form instead of the reality? It arises from the want of the essential qualities that constitute the genuine Christian; it arises from the want of grace in the heart, as the principle of universal devotedness to the divine will; it arises from the operation and the prevalence of the unsubdued propensities of man's corrupted nature. The nominal Christian has no root in himself. He knows nothing of that deep conviction of the evil of sin, and of the deceitfulness of the heart that precedes and accompanies true conversion. He has experienced no renewal by the power of the divine spirit. To that living faith in Christ which directs and animates cordial obedience, he is an entire stranger. He has received no supplies of spiritual strength out of the freeness that is in Christ, no unction from on high, no illumination from the fountain of light, and "the light that is in him is only darkness." And here let each pause, and ask himself, In this representation do I discover any part of my own likeness? With the fair show of an outward profession, is my heart carnal, and are my affections earthly? Have I experienced no "renewing by the Holy Ghost?" Is not "Christ yet formed" within me? Have I felt nothing of the "power of the world to come?" Am I more desirous to receive the praise of men than to please God? Am I destitute of those supplies of divine grace that can alone keep the flame of the Christian life from expiring? Let each examine and judge himself, lest he be finally condemned by his heart-searching Judge. But let us turn to a more pleasing subject of contemplation.

"The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

A suitable christian profession is both a

pleasing and presumptive evidence of internal holiness. "Out of the abundance of the heart," the believer speaks. "His light shines before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in heaven." There may indeed be, as there often is, much external sanctity without the accompaniment of inward holiness; yet the absence of a consistent life and conversation gives rise to just and serious doubts of the sincerity of the heart; and the believer exhibits himself "as blameless and harmless as one of the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom he shines as a light in the world." But with him the form is esteemed as nothing in comparison with the substance. Religion is a personal matter between his soul and God. It is the heart which is the source of natural defilement; and until the fountain be purified, the streams must partake of the original impurity from which they take their rise. The believer's heart, by the power of divine grace, has undergone a decided and saving change. Though "at one time darkness, he has become light in the Lord." His mind, naturally "enmity against God," has been enlightened by the knowledge of Christ, and a new direction has been given to the current of his affections and desires. He has been made wise unto salvation, and under the conviction of the unexpected coming of his Lord, like the wise virgins. "He takes oil in his vessel with his lamp," lest he should be taken by surprise, and left in utter darkness. Yes! the believer is "complete in Christ," and draws every needful supply out of his fulness. While he distrusts himself, he trusts in "the Lord his righteousness." "He takes to himself the whole armour of God," and is girt "with the sword of the Spirit," and under the guidance and protection of a divine power, he goes forth to wrestle with those "enemies that war against his soul," We plead not for the believer exemption from involuntary transgression. We plead not his entire release from sin, and from a temporary falling by temptation. No.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

The "foolish virgins," forgetting the object for which they had gone forth, returned to their foolishness; and "the wise, imagining that the bridegroom delayed his coming, and overcome by weariness, resigned themselves to repose. And has it all come to this? Are the foolish and the wise alike reduced to the same state of spiritual insensibility? No; "wisdom excels folly, as much as light excels darkness." The slumbers of the formalist excite no surprise. He is naturally "dead in trespasses and in sins," and his sleep is unto death. But while the believer slumbers, the eye of the mind is awake as the sentinel to give the alarm to the sleeping garrison within. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and of death. Yet there is a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity unto the law of sin. When he would do good, evil is present with him." Iniquities still adhere to him. His deceitful heart is still inclining him to the paths of folly. In watchfulness and every duty, there exists within him a principle acting in express opposition. The power of sin is subdued, but its deceitfulness exerts itself in active operation. But, my friends, let me guard this doctrine from abuse. Between the residue of sin in the believer, and its reigning power in the unrenewed, there exists a very wide difference! Here let each search and judge for himself. When "overtaken in a fault," does deep sorrow and instant application to the blood of sprinkling follow hard after the offence? Do you "strive against sin?" Are your hearts not the seat, not the willing, but the momentary residence of sinful affections? Are the "sins which most easily beset you," the sins which arise from sudden temptation, and not from cool deliberation? Does the experience of your own sinfulness fill you with holy jealousy, and inspire you with increasing vigilance? Do you form the decided purpose that you shall not be overcome? Does a sense of your natural weakness lead you to a closer reliance on divine strength? Do you aim after purity of heart more than external decency? And while it is your firm purpose to avoid all known sin, and to have respect to all God's requirements, is it your heart's desire and prayer, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We would then speak good, as there is "hope concerning you." You are not spiritually dead. The mind is awake, and should your Lord give you no previous warning of his approach, when he comes even suddenly, you shall be "ready to go in with him to the

marriage supper." Your Lord *may* come in an hour that you look not for him.

"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him"

At the hour of midnight, when every sound is hushed into silence, and not a motion to give warning of the coming of the bridegroom; at that moment he bursts upon his secure and unsuspecting slumberers. And what a just and striking representation does this afford us of the sudden and unexpected approach of death! In life, we are in the midst of death. The last messenger may arrest us amid the active engagements of life. We may admit him with the very food that sustains us. Like Satan among the sons of God, he may appear among us seated at table with our friends, and deliver the irreversible mandate, "Prepare to meet thy God." When we retire to our closets, our couches may conceal him, and the eyes which closed only in the emblem of death may be opened to behold the dawn of an eternal day. But why enlarge on the undeniable truth? Is it not brought home to you by almost every day's tidings or observation, in language far more impressive than the preacher's voice? Does it not address itself to the ear, and present the most moving appeals to the hearts of many? Yes; there is not a formalist nor a worldling that now hears me, whose God is the world, whose heart is in the world, whose portion is in the world and its pleasures, and who has not yet made one single step towards preparation for death; but will be beforehand with me in telling me, that the "Judge may be before the door." And does the solemn truth bear hard upon the believer in Christ? No; to him sudden death is sudden glory. The faithful watchman, though he may be overtaken by slumber, is awake at the alarm of danger; and the good soldier, while resting on his arms, exults in the unexpected arrival of the Captain of his salvation, to lead him on to final conquest. "He lifts up his head with joy as the hour of his redemption draweth nigh."

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

The *wise* "knew in whom they had believed," and they "commend their spirits into the hands of their God" and their Redeemer; and the *foolish*, under the same delusion in which they had lived, conceived that all was well with them, and that they could look forward with an assured confidence to a happy meeting with their Lord. But the "hope of the hypocrite shall perish," and his "heart fail," when "God takes away his soul."

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out."

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The immediate prospect of death has a forcible efficacy in opening those eyes that the god of this world has long sealed in spiritual slumber. When *behind*, there is nothing on which the soul may rest besides a lifeless formality; and *before*, are presented the rigours of an unsatisfied law, and the solemnities of a judgment-seat; and *within*, are felt the workings of an unrenewed heart. The secure are often awakened to a sense of their danger; but, alas! it may be too late, for their repentance and return unto God. They feel that they have been trusting to a "refuge of lies." Their religion stands them in no stead in their hour of need. They would call, but in vain, "upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them, and to hide them from Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." They must meet Him on a throne of judgment, whom they long rejected on a throne of mercy. They envy the graces and the dying peace of his servants whom they despised and charged with unnecessary strictness and zeal; and, with their expiring breath, they utter the fruitless prayer, "would that our souls were in your souls' stead, then there would be hope in our death, our peace would be as a river," our witness within, and our record "on high."

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you."

We never set limits to the divine prerogative of mercy. Had the foolish, instead of applying to the wise virgins, made their appeal to Him in whom all fulness dwells, the prayer, proceeding not out of "feigned lips," might have returned with its answer "ere they had left off speaking." The unrenewed soul, in its time of need, too often seeks for something in itself on which it may rest; or its breathings go forth for relief from those who like itself are by nature equally unworthy and dependent. But the Christian most replenished by the graces of the spirit has nothing whereof to

boast, and nothing which he can spare for the supply of another's need. "What has he which he has not received?" In himself he feels and he acknowledges that there "dwelleth no good thing." The "grace" by which he is saved, and "the faith" by which he lays hold of the Saviour's righteousness, are not his to give, for they are the "gifts" of God for his redemption. He has received according to, and not beyond his needs. Not unto me, but unto God through Christ be all the glory, is the humble and the grateful strain in which, both now and ever, he celebrates undeserved mercy; and he will "cast his crown before the throne," with "to him who loved me, and gave himself for me, be all the honour and the glory." He has a heart to feel for the impenitent and the unpardoned, but he can only be wise for himself; he can neither transfer to them any portion of his own holiness, nor answer for them at the day of reckoning. He gives them all that he can bestow, he gives them his pity, his counsel, and his prayers.

"But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

This is not the language of insult or unfeeling triumph, for "fools only make a mock of sin." Duty and not despair is ours;

> "For while the lamp holds on to burn,
> The greatest sinner may return."

Till life's taper be extinguished, hope still sheds its cheering ray, and to the last moment of expiring life, we are warranted to present, and to press home upon the formalist, and the backslider, and the openly impenitent, the same offers of salvation which they have so long spurned as unworthy of their notice. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Whosoever willeth, let him come and take of the waters of life freely." God is merciful, and "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through him, as he ever lives to make intercession for them." But though great in mercy, yet fearful in judgment is our God.

"For while they went to buy, the bridegroom came."

"The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The fearful thought of meeting with a holy God, and of exclusion from his blissful mansions, often appals the stoutest heart, and makes the sinner's knees to smite one against another. Like a drowning man, he snatches at every broken reed, that promises for a little to save him from sinking in the overwhelming gulf. He presents a few extorted prayers; he forms a few hasty purposes; and while under the influence, not of *faith*, but of *fear*, he is about to "set his house in order;" he is launched into the eternal world with all his unpardoned sins upon his head. Say, even with all the softenings of charity, is not this often the end of the formalist and the ungodly? And, oh! is it a time to live when you are about to die? Is it a time for the soul to "pass from death to life," when unsettled reason, and a confused memory, and an accusing conscience? when anguish of soul conspires with bodily pain and with weeping friends to distract the mind; is this the fit time for the soul to undergo a saving change from nature to grace, and to experience the transition from darkness and from slavery into the light and the liberty of the children of God? It is not thus that you are in matters of temporal import. Would you defer the execution of a work that required much thought and recollection to a season of sickness and approaching death? Go then to the children of this world, "they are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Leave not to the last hour the spiritual preparation which ought to constitute the great business of life. "Now is your accepted time, even now is your day of salvation." Be wise, while wisdom can avail you, for "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."

"And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut."

What heart can conceive, what tongue can describe "the things which God has prepared for them that love him." Their union with Christ upon earth, is only a faint emblem of that union with which he will espouse them to himself through everlasting ages. He will present them to his Father as the fruits of his purchase, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," The "days of their mourning shall be ended." No drowsiness shall overcome their

souls, nor dimness overcast their spiritual eyes. No cloud shall interpose between their souls and the sun of righteousness. No veil shall overspread his face, no veil be cast over their hearts. The "Lord shall be their everlasting light," and the "bright and the morning star," their unfading glory. "No enemy shall pluck them out of his and his Father's hands." "The door is shut," and in the kingdom of the Father they are admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb, where they "shall eat bread" and "drink wine new with Him" whom their souls love, for ever and ever. And I would here willingly stop, nor does it accord with my sympathies to disturb the aspirings of the heaven-born soul, but I must not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God.

"Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

The door that shuts in the believer within the holy precincts of his Father's house, for ever excludes the self-righteous formalist. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." As death leaves you, thus will judgment find you. "In the grave there is neither knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device." "He that is holy, continues holy still; and he that is unrighteous, remains unrighteous" for ever. Yes, my friends, in the silent tomb there is no place for repentance. There no risings of the soul ascend to God in earnest supplication; no actings of a living faith to lay hold of a Saviour's merits; no spirit to apply the things of Christ to the soul; no house of God to become a gate to heaven. Say, then, how stands the state between God and your own souls? Had the Bridegroom already come, would you have been found ready? Were you now to receive the summons, would you choose death rather than life? We press it home to you, that such as is your readiness at death, such will it be when you meet your Judge. We charge you, by the momentous truth, that no importunity nor extorted repentance at the judgment-seat can effect a change in your hearts, nor cancel the guilt of unpardoned sin, nor arrest the course of justice. We beseech you farther, to bear in your recollection *who* those characters were whom Christ put to silence by the irreversible, "I know you not." They were not charged with heinous offences. They were neither thieves, nor drunkards, nor fornicators, nor blasphemers of God's name. Of all such, indeed, God's Word expressly declares, that while they continued under the dominion of sin, and without Christ, they are utterly without hope. The characters whom Christ condemns could plead that they maintained an unblameable profession, and so may you. They could plead that they were exemplary in their attendance upon the ordinances of religion, and so may you. But they had no saving knowledge of Christ, nor of their own hearts, and Christ did not know them as his people. And if *you* are trusting to that which was of no avail to *them;* and if you are not "found in Christ," and his image stamped anew on your souls, and the graces of the christian character in vigorous exercise, your state does not differ from theirs, and such as theirs will your doom be.

But we hasten to the important, practical lesson, so strongly enforced by Christ:

"Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

Are you in jeopardy every day, every hour of your fleeting existence? Are the enemies of your souls ever awake, and your own deceitful hearts the ready auxiliaries in giving efficacy to their malice and their snares? Is a state of security the most favourable to the incursions of sin, and the most prejudicial to the growth of the graces of the divine life? Oh! then, listen to the kindly counsel of Him "who knows what is in you," and who knows the stratagems of the enemies that "watch for your halting." His frequent enforcements of the duty of watchfulness must convince you of its suitableness to your spiritual needs.

Are you in the youthful period of life? We have no other way of addressing you, but to repeat, "Watch ye therefore." Your lamp may go speedily out, ere it has well begun to burn; and if you die without a deep sense of God, and the knowledge of Christ in your hearts, you will die only as the children of darkness. Let the incense of an early devotedness to duty ascend before your father's God. Let it be kept burning by constant supplies from the fountain above. When sinners entice you, con-

sent not; but go unto God, and say unto him, "O my Father, be thou the guide of my youth." When your own wayward hearts would lead you astray from the paths of duty, surrender them to the keeping of Him who is now alike regardful of the lambs of his flock, as when "he took little children in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them." Apply daily to the word of God for counsel and direction. It will put you on your guard against the enemies of your souls, and instruct you in the use of that christian armour by which you may be kept from falling. Let the Holy Scriptures be "the lamp unto your feet, and the light unto your path; for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is a light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life."

Are you in the mid-day of your earthly being? Death will pay no respect to your health and vigour. "While it is yet day," your sun may go unexpectedly down; and if you are not justified by the righteousness, and renewed by the Spirit of Christ, there will follow a night of unutterable darkness, to be succeeded by no returning blissful day. Are you men in years, and yet children in spiritual attainments? Is the half of life gone, perhaps the whole of it about to expire, and have you yet to begin the work of your eternal salvation? Oh! "spend no longer your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not." "Awake, O sleeper, call upon thy God, so be that thou perish not." "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" While the god of this world is using every device to blind thine eyes, "lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them, we would beseech thee to make thy suit unto that almighty God who can alone shine into thy heart, and "give thee the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

And, ye men of grey hairs! are ye watchful, and prepared for your coming change? We know not well how to address you. Your sun, to every eye, but perhaps your own, is evidently going down; and if you are relying on the small space between him and the land of darkness, he may speedily set and leave you in the blackness of despair. If your sins, unrepented and unforgiven, are about "to lie down with you in the dust," I can only bear you on my spirit before God; and, with "much anguish of heart," put up the earnest prayer, "Father, forgive them: let these dry bones live." If you have grown old in the service of Christ, he will not forsake you in your grey hairs. "He who cometh, will come, and will not tarry; and he will bring his reward along with him." Be watchful unto prayer. "Give glory to the Lord your God," by turning unto him, or walking closely with him, "before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

And with a brief address to the two characters to whom this parable immediately applies, I will conclude.

And, first, does the Word of God assign to you a place among the foolish virgins? It is much to be feared that there are many such in the visible church of Christ. They "have not the Spirit of Christ," and he will at last disown them; for "they are none of his." Examine yourselves by the searching light of God's word, under the direction of the enlightening Spirit. Bring your hearts and lives to the standard of the "law and the testimony, and let conscience give in its verdict. Are your hearts right with God? for if the new heart be wanting, every service and every duty is hypocritical and vain. Are your minds not enlightened by the knowledge of the "truth as it is in Jesus?" Are you not yet brought into a state of salvation, by the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost?" Is there no conformity within you, or about you, to the mind and to the life of Christ? Are you trusting to a lifeless round of unholy duties, in which the heart has no share? Have you not the "root of the matter" within you, and is "your root only as rottenness?" "Are you walking in the light of your own fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled?" Oh! if this be the case, you are not able to "stand before the Holy Lord God," who searcheth the heart. Great will be the consternation of the nominal Christian, when God either at the hour of death discloses to him the state of his heart; or when, in his sifting presence, he will give to conscience its long-lost power of passing a righteous sentence. Oh! bless God that he is still bearing with you. Cry mightily

unto him. "Create in me a clean heart, O God: renew a right spirit within me." Seek that "unction from the Holy One," by which you may know yourselves, and all things needful for salvation. "Search me, O God, and try me: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way within me; and good Lord! do thou lead me in the way everlasting."

And, finally, can you conscientiously rank yourselves in the number of the wise virgins? Have you a well-grounded assurance of your personal salvation? Can you say, "we are ready to be offered up?" Have you even tremblingly laid hold of "the hem of the Saviour's garment," and sued in faith for the lowest place in his Father's house?" "Rejoice, and be glad, and give honour unto him, for the marriage of the Lamb is" about to "come," and you will be ready to go in with him to his supper. "Sleep not then as do others, but watch, and be sober." "Watch unto prayer." "Be faithful unto the death." "Be diligent, that ye be found of God in peace." Be on your guard against the first movements of sin within you, or without you, lest you be led captive by its deceit. Never venture upon forbidden, or even upon questionable ground. Trust not yourselves within the territories of your enemies, lest by partaking with them in their slumbers, the adversary of your souls get an advantage over you. Believe it, he bears you no good will, and to find you slumbering with your lamps dimly burning, or sleeping at your post with your armour off, would be to *him* a time of malicious triumph, and to *you* might prove "the hour and the power of darkness." Be ever awake at the voice of God, in whatever way he may speak to you. "Stand upon your watch-tower, and watch to see what God will say to you, and what you will answer, when you are reproved." Never imagine that your highest attainments place you beyond the reach of temptation, or supersede the necessity of constant watchfulness, and renewed supplies of divine strength. "Look to yourselves that you lose not those things which you have wrought, but that ye receive a sure reward." Draw daily out of the Redeemer's fulness for "wisdom" and "righteousness," and "sanctification." You need daily supplies of divine grace, not only to keep you from falling, but to "strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die," and to render your "path, like the morning light, brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." Honour the divine spirit in the carrying on that work in your souls, which his holy energy has begun, and in keeping alive that flame, which his sacred fire at first kindled. Bear upon your minds an abiding sense of God's special mercies towards you, of your endearing relation to Christ, and of the ingratitude and the danger of grieving the divine spirit, "by whom you are sealed unto the day of redemption." Thus watching, and praying, and trusting, you can only be kept by a divine power through faith unto your everlasting salvation. And "I commend you all unto God and to the word of his grace. May God himself sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." May your "loins be continually girt," and "your lamps burning, and yourselves as those who wait for the coming of their Lord." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." May this blessedness be yours, and "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits." Amen.

AGAINST EVIL SPEAKING;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF WISTON, ON THE 23D JULY, 1835, BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AS A NATIONAL FAST, AND THE THURSDAY IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE COMMUNION SABBATH IN THAT PARISH

By the Rev. CHARLES HOPE,

Minister of Wandell and Lamington.

"*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*"—JAMES iv. 11

WERE we to attempt to draw an estimate of the comparative moral worth of our species in times past and present, and to be guided in our conclusions by what we hear and meet with in the daily intercourse of promiscuous society, by the vast numbers who every where constitute themselves the censors and judges of other men's conduct; by the eagerness and assiduity with which they hunt out and expose not merely the vices, but the failings and foibles of their victims; we should be apt at first thought to infer, that a general association had been formed to drag folly from her lurking places, and vice from her strongholds; and that the present age, if not already indeed the most virtuous and fastidiously moral that has yet appeared in the world, cannot, at least, fail soon to become so! But, on the other hand, when we find that all are made the indiscriminate objects of correction; that no exaltation of rank, no sacredness of character, no seeming sanctity of life, no attainable propriety of conduct, can ensure a safe defence against the shafts of so rigid a discipline; and that even those self-elected judges are themselves also subjected to the strictures of each other, we are led to conclude, that the times in which we live, so far from being the most virtuous and exemplary, must unquestionably be the most foolish and generally viciated age that has yet occurred in the annals of our race!

Without venturing, however, to pronounce the balance of virtue to be in favour either of ancient or of modern times, still we may assert, without fear of contradiction, that the vice against which we are cautioned in the words of our text, is one for which the present age is notoriously distinguished.

We shall not take up your time in offering any thing like an explanation of what is *meant* by *evil-speaking*. The term is familiar, and has only to be applied individually to the case of all, in order to be fully understood by even the meanest capacity! To state, therefore, the *origin*, to *expose the deformity*, and to *dissuade from the indulgence* of this vice, is the intended object of the following discourse.

In the *first place*, then, as to its origin, Calumny, like every other evil that embitters the happiness or tarnishes the present good name of mankind, may finally be traced to the original corruption of human nature, and to the want of that abiding principle of true religion which alone can ensure the mastery over every evil propensity, and fit all, individually, to comport themselves aright in the ever-varying and multifarious relations of social life. Of the *secondary* and more immediate causes, however, of this baneful and prevailing vice—idleness, envy, revenge, malice, and spiritual pride—may perhaps, without much uncharitableness in the supposition, be naturally assigned as the chief and most common sources from whence it flows.

It has often been said, that when the *devil* finds a man idle, he generally sets him to work; for as the mind of man is essentially active and cannot long bear the languor and irksomeness of mere idleness, so when he is not habitually employed in the acquisition of learning and knowledge, the pursuits of science, the cultivation of the fine arts, or engaged in one or other of the

more common, yet not less useful occupations of humble life, he will most likely soon become busied in pursuits of an opposite kind! And hence mere idleness is not only a useless, but even a highly dangerous state of existence—an inlet to every evil which can either disgrace or embitter the life of man; and to none does it afford a more ready and direct access than to that of calumny! For, who are those most frequently distinguished for evil-speaking? Look amongst them and say, if they are in general such as one would hold up for examples in mental refinement, in regular habits, and in assiduity to their worldly callings? Are they not more commonly mere *idlers* in their own affairs; as prisoners in their own homes, weary of confinement; "busy bodies," continually prying into the concerns of others, with an insatiable curiosity for whatever is new in their own contracted circle; going about from place to place, and with itching ears listening, with secret satisfaction, rather to what is injurious, than to what is favourable to the characters of their neighbours? What they hear with pleasure, they are in pain to communicate; and in order the more effectually to excite interest, and to command attention in those who hear them, they add to the original rumour all the colouring of their own low prejudices and party feelings; and thus, though they are unable to order aright their own paltry concerns, are nevertheless competent, in their own estimation, to direct the affairs of thousands!

But to a habit of idleness, may be mentioned also *envy*, as not an unfrequent cause of evil speaking among mankind. At once the characteristic and tormenter of weak and badly regulated minds, this passion often attains to such a pitch of strength and impetuosity, that, levelling before it every better principle of our nature, it hurries on to acts of violence that at last leave its possessor a just victim to the injured laws of humanity! But even when it ends not in such consummate and tragical depravity, how hurtful still may be its lesser and more restrained manifestations, to the peace and happiness of human society! Fallen, perhaps, through habits of idleness and dissipation, from that rank in society which greater prudence and exertion might have enabled him to maintain, or, finding himself outstripped in the journey of life, by those who were but his equals or even inferiors in the outset, and whom, but for his own misguided conduct, he might still have equalled or surpassed—the man in whose bosom is fanned the spark of envy, sickens at the sight of that prosperity which he cannot reach; vilifies as crooked and suspicious that line of conduct by which it has been obtained; affects to undervalue that happiness which worldly success seems to confer; ascribes to penuriousness of disposition, or to an unaccountable flow of good luck, whatever a more amiable or generous mind would naturally be disposed to set down to the credit of commendable economy, united to a system of virtuous and undeviating industry. No opportunity is allowed to escape, no means left untried, whereby he may blast the credit or reputation of the unsuspecting object of his envenomed and peace-destroying passion! Does any one experience those occasional losses and disappointments which are inseparable from a mixed state of commercial life? *Envy* listens to the rumour with secret satisfaction, and is immediately at work to exaggerate them into serious embarrassments; and, while it whispers the injurious report in the ear of every passenger, affects, at the same time, to sigh over it, as but one of the many instances of the fleeting nature of all earthly prosperity! Or, should this seem a slow, and almost hopeless mode of effecting its purpose, the same envious principle, ever at work for the humiliation and overthrow of its more fortunate neighbour, hears with eagerness, and retails with assumed regret, every thing that can be construed into a deviation from moral rectitude in his conduct, and overlooking none of those foibles and peculiarities which adhere to even the best of characters, is ever fluent on the necessity of avoiding all appearance of evil! And, thus, while loud in the praise of ideal virtue, it is still continually detracting from all that is amiable or praiseworthy in real life. But farther, *Revenge*, also, not unfrequently prompts men to the indulgence of evil speaking. Any sense of injury received, whether real or supposed, too readily stimulates to retaliation or revenge; and so deeply is this propensity rooted in the heart of the *natural* man, that where it is not softened by a principle of true religion, or checked and overawed by the terrors of human institutions, it never fails to issue in

the perpetration of the foulest deeds, at once the bane and reproach of civil society, and which cannot but invariably end in the misery, if not also in the destruction, of those misguided beings by whom they have been committed! But though the fear of detection and the dread of punishment may restrain those who are not otherwise deterred by religious principle, from acts of open violence and injustice against the unoffending object of their hate, still how many modes are there of gratifying the odious spirit of revenge, to which the imperfection of human laws does not, and cannot reach? Where the hopes of concealment are so strong, and the fears of personal chastisement so slight, as to be scarcely any check at all upon the purposes of the aggressor! Few modes of attack seem to unite so completely safety to the assailant and injury to the person assailed, as that which is presented through the medium of calumny. And hence it is so frequently adopted by the cold-blooded, cowardly malicious, and revengeful! No matter how innocent and unoffending, how distinguished and exemplary, may be the object of their hatred, to have incurred *their* displeasure, however unwittingly, is cause sufficient for letting loose all the envenomed shafts of slander! In their mouth there is no faithfulness, their throats are an open sepulchre, the breath of which, like a pestilential vapour, blasts the beauty of the fairest virtues, and canker-like riots on all that is lovely and estimable in human nature! Should any blemishes mingle in the character subjected to their strictures, (and where is he that can understand his errors or truly say that he hath no sin?) these are diligently dug for among the transactions of by-past years, as for hidden treasures—are exaggerated and spitefully repeated upon every occasion, as far outweighing the possession of every supposed excellence, which again is as assiduously either greatly detracted from, or altogether thrust into the shade. Where nothing very objectionable is found, invention and evil surmisings speedily supply the deficiency! Dignity of conduct is represented as pride insufferable; steadiness and regular habits of industry are characterized as moroseness and a selfish devotion to base and worldly interests; temperance and sobriety as coldness of heart and a culpable want of sociality; cheerfulness and playful humour as levity of mind and a proneness to every thing licentious! In short, no effort is left untried to lower in the esteem of the world, that excellence which the envious and malicious sicken to behold, and of which they seem evermore anxious to despoil their neighbours, than laudably ambitious to possess the like good qualities themselves.

But yet farther. There are some who appear to indulge in a habit of evil-speaking, for whose conduct no possible reason can be assigned, but the mere innate malice of their hearts, or the secret desire of mischief. Such are those who without any personal provocation, or the least shadow of excuse, wantonly attack without discrimination, the characters of all around them! Human only in appearance, they are in heart and disposition but demons in disguise. Offspring of the *devil*, their affections are from the beginning hollow and malignant like the *father of lies*, whose works they are determined to do! Emissaries of Satan, like him, they go about continually seeking whom they may devour! Whetting their teeth, like ravening wolves, to glut on all that is innocent, virtuous and commendable in human nature, they fabricate and promulgate, with a fatiguing industry, reports the most injurious to the reputation, interests and personal feelings of their brethren. Unhappy in themselves, they lose no opportunity of endeavouring to disturb the peace of others! Conscious of their own depravity of heart, yet without any desire of amendment, they are bent on representing all their neighbours as still more corrupted than themselves. Apostates from virtue, and lost to that happiness which arises from a consciousness of acting well, their only remaining hope of preserving any thing like a standing in society, is in secretly undermining the good name of all around them, and in attempting to extinguish that blaze of well-earned reputation in the truly deserving, which at present renders, by comparison, their own characters so fiend-like and detestable! Surely if there is *one* disposition in human nature more to be execrated than another, it *must* be *that* which impels its possessor to a course of conduct such as what we have now been endeavouring to portray! But yet farther again. The only remaining topic, to which we here claim your attention, as one of the many

sources from which a habit of evil-speaking may sometimes proceed, is that of spiritual pride.

This was a very common cause of evil-speaking among professing Christians in the earliest age of the Church, as we learn from the writings of both the apostles, Paul and James; and it is much to be lamented, that the same spirit is but too prevalent in modern times, not merely as regards individuals of different christian sects and denominations, but even amongst such as profess themselves brethren of the same church, both as to communion and discipline. Nothing has a stronger tendency to render a man arrogant, and contemptuous in his conduct towards others, than a false idea of his own superior attainments in knowledge and in religion; while, at the same time, not a surer evidence can well be given of the presence of ignorance, and of the want of the true spirit of the Gospel! For he who has made the highest advances in religious knowledge, is ever the most fully sensible how little, after all, he can comprehend of the mysteries of godliness; and he, likewise, who has reached the farthest progress in the divine life, is still the most forward to acknowledge that he is nevertheless at best but an unprofitable servant!

Puffed up, however, with fancied attainments in matters of mere speculative belief, and with an overweening conceit of their own strict observance of the ceremonials of religion, the spiritually proud, like the Pharisees of old, are forward upon all occasions to prescribe, with an air of authority, rules to others, even in things the most trifling, judging them in meat and in drink, and in the observance of one day above another, ever ready to censure those of more humble pretensions than themselves, spying out heresies in their hearts, condemning their external deportment as differing from their own; and, in short, erecting themselves into a tribunal, to the decisions of which all must bow, and holding up themselves as an infallible standard in matters both of faith and practice, even in those things which revelation itself has left undecided, as of no vital importance, and which the immediate apostles of our Lord themselves were pleased to designate as, at most, but matters of "doubtful disputation."

Although, then, the tracing of the origin of any very prevalent practice among mankind, such as that of evil-speaking, to sources so impregnated with every evil principle, might, we apprehend, to every reflecting mind, sufficiently demonstrate such practice to be in itself odious and morally bad; yet, for sake of farther illustrating the subject of our present discourse, and of exposing more particularly the deformity of such a habit, we shall,

In the *second* place, and in conformity with our design in the outset, submit to your attention the few following considerations.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. CHARLES HOPE, Wandell.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES GIBSON, Glasgow.

AGAINST EVIL SPEAKING

A Sermon by the Rev. CHARLES HOPE.—*Concluded*.

AND hence we would remind you, that calumny or evil-speaking is a mean and cowardly vice! For, as there are gradations in *crime*, so likewise are there gradations in the *meanness* with which actions nearly equal in moral turpitude are committed. Thus the lawless conqueror, who scruples not to "wade through slaughter to a throne," yet dazzles by the splendour of his achievements; and he who has "shut the gates of mercy on mankind," and been the death of millions of his species, is still less an object of horror and detestation than he who, at the dead of night, or with a treacherous smile upon his countenance, plunges a dagger into the breast of his unsuspecting victim! The most ferocious freebooter, who lives by the open plunder of his neighbours, has yet been known to despise the *meanness* of betraying, even towards a foe, that confidence once reposed in his honour or hospitality! And hence, therefore, more despicable is the dastardly *thief*, who prowls under the shade of night, than the highway robber who exposes his life for the sake of plunder, and in open day braves the risk of after detection.

If you would blush, then, to have your names associated with the thief and the robber, or to be but once supposed even to participate in the fruits of their foul misdeeds, can you, for a moment, think it less mean, or less criminal to assassinate the character of your neighbour, which to every good man is dearer than life? To filch from him that which constitutes his most valued possession, which, to many, is all they have whereon to depend for the support of themselves and families, and to *all* is absolutely necessary, to the true enjoyment of the good things of this life, with which Providence may have blessed their condition? And all this, too, not from any temptation of thereby bettering your own condition, but from the mere malignant and wanton desire of wounding your neighbour's feelings; of hurting his credit or worldly circumstances; of destroying his usefulness, and of thus rendering him an object of pity or of contempt, in the sight of all around him?

But we would have you to recollect, farther, that evil-speaking is not only mean and cowardly in the extreme, but is also characterized by the blackest injustice! If a man has any cause of offence against his neighbour, he will, if he be a person of right feeling, or of a candid and ingenuous disposition, freely state to him in private the grounds of this his offence, real or supposed, and if no satisfactory explanation, apology, or compensation be given, the laws of every well-regulated community afford him ample means of redress, without having recourse to the base and unmanly expedient of retaliating with the shafts of calumny. For as no sense of injury sustained, can justify in law, an open act of aggression on our part in return, so neither is it fair nor honourable to attack, at all times and in every quarter, the character of our neighbour, even though he may sometimes

have afforded us cause of complaint. Is it justice though he may, in some instances, have failed in duty towards us, to represent him as deficient in all; to go about privily slandering him in his absence, fabricating stories to his hurt, without once, perhaps, having acquainted him with the cause of our displeasure; to condemn him, in short, without a hearing in his defence, and for that, too, of which perhaps the cause lies chiefly with ourselves? It may be that we have exacted too much of our neighbour, have been too ready to suppose ourselves aggrieved, too sensitive in perceiving an insult where none was intended, and, thus, have been but too easily led to let our imagination get the better of our judgment.

If such, accordingly, be an unfair mode of dealing towards a suspected friend, or even when certain overt acts but too strongly bespeak to us his hostile disposition, how unjust must it be to corrode with the tooth of slander the reputation of those against whom, even in the utmost secrecy of our own minds, we cannot urge one single act of personal wrong, to plead as our apology! Yet such, it is to be feared, is too generally the inexcusable conduct of many, when they have once fairly given themselves up to the debasing habit of evil-speaking! But is that man to be termed a thief and a robber, to be treated as an outcast from society, or even given over to the injured laws of his country, who, tempted by the desire of gain, or languishing in abject poverty, friendless and deserted by the world, in an evil hour puts forth his hand to the goods of his neighbour, for the purpose of prolonging his own miserable existence? And shall *he* be accounted honest or upright in conduct, who, without the temptation of earthly advantage, but merely to gratify a malignant feeling, secretly steals from his neighbour his good name, a jewel in his estimation of the highest price, and when weighed with which, all the goods of fortune are regarded by him as mere dust in the balance? The laws of human society, indeed, imperfect like their founders, it is possible for a conduct *even* thus highly aggravated to elude; yet assuredly it shall not be overlooked at that tribunal, where every *idle word* shall be accounted for, and at which the merciful alone are promised mercy! This accordingly brings us to observe, yet farther, upon this head, that a habit of evil-speaking is in direct opposition to the spirit of our holy religion.

"If any man among you," says the apostle James, "seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain;" vain, inoperative, and insincere, inasmuch as he acts diametrically opposite to the whole spirit of the gospel. Hence the same apostle adds in the sequel to our text, "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." Now to judge the law of God as faulty, is to offer the highest insult to him that gave it; it is arrogating to ourselves the place of lawgivers, in contradiction to his authority; setting up our own opinions as the standard of right and wrong, the criterion by which we pass sentence on the conduct of our brethren, a practice alike condemned both by the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. Its blessed Founder has encouraged us to the exercise of mercy, by assuring us that we shall infallibly find mercy in return! Even in that comprehensive form of prayer which he has left us as a guide and directory in addressing our supplications to the throne of divine grace, no hope of pardon is held out to such as cherish an implacable feeling towards their brethren. Strong and explicit in another passage, is the language of the divine Saviour, "If," says he, "ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father *will* also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." So perfectly hostile, indeed, is a habit of evil-speaking to the genius of the gospel, that no precept whatever is more frequently and more earnestly inculcated by our Lord, than a principle of charity and forgiveness amongst all his followers! "Love," says he, "your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Nay, this principle of charity and mutual forbearance, is, upon another occasion, expressly stated as the only infallible mark of his *sincere* followers, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." And surely no man can be such a stranger to the nature of love, as to venture to affirm, that it ever discovers itself in publishing the

faults, exaggerating the errors, or in ridiculing the foibles of the object beloved! And what is the reason that men never comment with severity on their own vices, or those of their families and particular friends? What else, but that their partialities in these instances are such, as either in a great measure obscure their perception of what is wrong, or at least induce them to throw a veil of indulgent charity over it. Nor will it be any palliation of this evil habit, to affirm that it is only by thus exposing the faults and failings of others, that mankind in general can be brought to think of amendment; for besides denying the adaptation of the means to the end required (an assumption which the daily occurrences of life tend but too clearly to disprove,) it may be urged against the defamer, that if such were his philanthropic intentions, the partialities of nature would invariably lead him, in the first place, to apply the corrective to himself, and to those who hold the highest place in his affections, and that this is never the case, or never by any chance enters into this alleged plan for reforming the vices of the world, clearly demonstrates that, in his own opinion, the medicine is at best but a nauseous one, the application but a painful and desperate experiment, affording no rational hope of ever effecting a cure!

Neither will it be any valid excuse for indulging in a habit of censoriousness against our neighbours—that they *really have* their faults, or may have given us cause of offence! For the former allegation, or a common charge of imperfection, may be lodged against the whole human race; and, moreover, we are all amenable for our conduct unto God! Hence, says St. Paul, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand." And we are farther taught to forgive our brother, though he sin against us, not merely seven times a-day, but even, it may be, until *seventy times seven!* We are expressly told, that true charity or brotherly love suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not at another's happiness; is not puffed up with an idea of its own superior excellence; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in hearing of the iniquity or misfortunes of one's neighbour; beareth all things, believeth all things, ever hopeth the best of all things; endureth all things; never faileth; and, in reference to others covereth the multitude of sins! In short, evil-speaking is contrary to that golden rule of equity laid down in the Gospel, of ever doing to others what we would wish that they should do unto us; and is, moreover, at open variance with the great example of Christ himself, who went about continually doing good; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

Having thus endeavoured to trace out the origin, and to expose the turpitude of evil-speaking, let us now, in the third and last place, adduce a few considerations, which naturally, as well as powerfully, ought to lead all men to guard against, or to forsake, a habit so odious and unchristian. And these are chiefly suggested to us by the concluding word of our text, namely, that we are "brethren."

In the first place, then, we are brethren by creation. We all boast the same high descent from Adam! All are the children of him, our one common parent, created in the image of God, endowed with an immortal principle, possessed of powers of reason and of understanding capable of raising our views and desires above the mean and perishable objects of this world, to pursuits of a more noble and lasting endurance beyond death and the grave!

To indulge, therefore in calumny and malignant sarcasm against our fellow-creatures—those of our own flesh and blood—is a gross and unnatural perversion of all those exalted faculties by which our race has been distinguished—a habit which at once degrades us beneath the rank of the lower animals, and insults the wisdom and majesty of God the Creator, by thus vilifying the noblest of his works!

In the next place also, we are "brethren" in the original corruption of our nature. Born with the same passions, laden with the like infirmities, inheriting the frailties and imperfections of him from whom at first we sprung, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God! Even the very best of men have wherewith to accuse themselves in his presence—have many errors to be corrected, many propensities to be checked, many temptations to be guarded against, many follies to be lamented, and many sins to be repented of and forsaken! In the emphatic language of Scripture, it may be affirmed of our race, that "there is not even a just man upon earth that doeth good and sin

neth not." Where, then, it may be asked, shall we look for that perfection, that never-swerving line of right conduct in human nature, which alone could warrant the open or free exercise of a rigid and indiscriminate investigation of the characters of others? For, "if we justify ourselves, our own mouths shall condemn us; if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us!" It were well, then, for the peace of society, and surely in itself more becoming the frailty of human nature, if, instead of taking such an unwearied and general concern in detecting the failings of others, those who set themselves up, as it were, as the undisputed *patentees* of censure, would in the first place inspect a little more closely the various springs of action in their own conduct; for, assuredly, if men were but half as anxious to correct their *own* faults, as they are in general anxious to unveil the failings of their neighbours, the most of them would find sufficient wherewith to occupy their cares at home; and all would find less time and less desire to investigate the motives and dissect the characters of their brethren! Before discovering that there is a mote in their brother's eye, they would be careful first to cast out the beam that is in their own! Instead of saying, as the hypocritical Pharisee did, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all I possess"—they would rather say with David, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults;" or with the poor contrite publican, who standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smiting upon his breast exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

But, in the third place, we are "brethren" by one common faith in Christ Jesus! St. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, has these words: that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "And as many," says St. John, "as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Now, have not all we been admitted into the visible church of Christ, by one baptism, through the profession of one faith in one Lord, by one Spirit, unto one hope of the same glorious inheritance, even life everlasting.

Seeing, then, that all are the children God, by faith in Christ Jesus; that as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, and have openly avowed that it is their highest happiness and pride to be accounted members of his family; is it not, accordingly, fit and becoming as dutiful children, that all should conform to the rules of his household, and, like good brethren of the same spiritual flock, study ever to dwell together in love? "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are yet one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit." Therefore if we are really Christians, one temper, one spirit of peace, must pervade the whole! "I beseech you," says St. Paul, "that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And says St. James, "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

Seeing also that we look for the coming of Christ, and the glorious fulfilment of his promises, "let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it," through lack of brotherly love! "For hereby know we that we have passed from death unto life, if we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." And we know yet farther, that "though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have even faith so that we could remove mountains, yet have not charity, or brotherly love, it profiteth us nothing, we are but as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal!"

But yet farther, we would have you all seriously to consider, that you are now called upon in an eminent degree, in this the day of your merciful visitation, at this season of deep humiliation and general confes-

sion on account of national sins, and of which that referred to by the apostle, in the words of our text, is certainly by no means the least crying, if indeed it may not rather be termed the very *besetting vice* of our rural population, more particularly in thinly inhabited districts like our own. You are especially called upon from henceforth, to "set a watch before the doors of your mouths, that you no longer in this respect offend against God," by wantonly "speaking evil one of another." And to this you are even urged, by the additional consideration, that ye are "brethren," not merely by the general name of Christian, but as being likewise of one and the same communion, professing members of the same reformed and protestant church! Yes, of that same church which was amongst the first in Christendom to shake off the fetters of papal tyranny and superstition, and to cause the word of God, that greatest boon of heaven to man, to be translated into your native tongue, and circulated without reserve amongst the humblest of the community! Yes, we repeat it, of *that* church, in defence of which your own ancestors stood forward almost to a man, when her liberties were formerly threatened by a popish faction and an arbitrary government, preferring to be hunted as wild beasts upon the mountains, yea, to encounter bloodshed and death in its most appalling aspect, rather than tamely submit to see the beauty of their *Zion* defaced, or one branch injured of that goodly tree which *their* fathers had so carefully planted, whose roots had been nourished by the blood of martyrs, and of whose blessed fruits, under her all refreshing shade, it was their most anxious prayer at the hour of dissolution, that their children's children might partake, even till the remotest generations. Did our *fathers*, then, fearlessly brave such a fiery trial of persecution, in order that they might entail upon the poorest of their descendants, to the latest ages, the inestimable blessings of a preached gospel; and shall we their insensate children be ungrateful for the favour, or basely yield up such a goodly heritage, at the risk of our every comfort here, and of our salvation hereafter? Shall we suffer ourselves to be shaken in our first principles as members of that church, by the fallacies of men of no religious principle? to be driven from our high vantage ground by the low scoffs or idle threats of ignorant and mercenary men, who grudge us our pre-eminence, and who, in the prosperity of the Establishment, perceive only their own degradation, or anticipate the decay and accelerated extinction of their present factious and tottering cause? Are we tamely to relinquish our sacred birthright for a mere mess of pottage? The undefined, but treacherous and unhallowed idea, that were the Church but only destroyed, we might then riot unrestrained in freedom of thought and in liberty of action. Are we prepared to take upon our own heads the blood of generations yet unborn, who may hereafter be called upon to reconquer that which we are now so cowardly disposed to resign? or to answer for the innumerable multitude of human souls who may eventually "perish for lack of knowledge," through our voluntary abandonment of the religious privileges of that church, which, to them equally with us, as the descendants of the early reformers, constitute the most valuable of their imprescriptible rights, and, consequently, can never be alienated by any intermediate generation of men, but at the risk of the most fearful responsibility to an offended God, for thus wantonly sacrificing the best interests of the Redeemer's kingdom? Did our pious forefathers, in their persevering contendings for the faith, their unwearied and eventually successful efforts to accomplish the happy establishment of their favourite Church, unite in heart and in soul, as well as in deed and in action, and shall we their descendants, who no less openly profess ourselves the adherents of the Established Presbyterian Church of Scotland than did they, shall *we* only weaken her interests by our own internal broils? Shall we still foster petty jealousies against our neighbours? Shall we only be indulging the vilest feelings of an unregenerate nature, by continually inventing and circulating the most cruel slanders, and by pouring forth from day to day the stream of malignant sarcasm, to the prejudice of our spiritual guides, or the scorn of our fellow-worshippers? And that too at a time like this, when the enemies of the church, papists and sectarians of every possible character and shade, and of the most opposite views in religion, are openly banding themselves in unholy alliance with avowed infidels and men of no religion whatever, for the express purpose of sapping the very foundations of our national Zion, for wresting from us that for which our fathers bled, which a Knox and a Wishart, a Melvil and a Henderson

reckoned the peculiar boast of their times, and which, amid all their sore travails and fiery trials, they ever fondly cherished the hope, was yet destined to be the happiness and the glory of their beloved country in the latter days, for the express purpose, in short, of undoing all that these holy men did for the religious and moral regeneration of their native land; for uprooting the glorious plant of the gospel, that tree whose leaves are so obviously and peculiarly for the healing of the nation! and thus, in direct opposition to the gracious promise of the Saviour himself, and with marked contempt of that liberal provision for the regular supply of moral and religious food to the meanest in his household, doing all that in them lies to deprive for ever, the poor of a preached gospel, by withholding from them, the most valuable jewel in the birthright of every native of the British Isles, namely, a free unrestricted access to the house of God, "without money and without price."

In urging you, my brethren, to avoid all strife, contention, and evil-speaking among yourselves, you may, as members of the establishment, be reminded, that a good lesson in this respect may be learnt even from your enemies—the sectarians around you! How bitter soever *they* may be against *the Church* and all *church going people*, yet they surpass churchmen in this, namely, in charity and forbearance towards those of their own particular communion! But rarely, if ever, to their credit be it spoken, will you hear a seceder from the establishment, or a dissenter of any description whatever, give way in public to an ill-natured remark or severe comment, either upon the conduct or qualifications of his minister; and almost equally rare is it for him to assail with severity the character of *any* whom he once knows to belong to his own limited sect or particular denomination!

If it be sinful, then, to indulge in a habit of evil-speaking against any man, or any set of men, it is particularly unnatural, and consequently sinful in an aggravated degree, to manifest such a spirit against those of our own communion, with whom, in the providence of God, we may be brought into the closest position in the discharge of even the most solemn ordinances of our holy religion! Hence I would warn you, yet more especially, that you are doubly called upon this day not only to the confession and forsaking of your sins in general, but of this sin of evil-speaking in particular, from the consideration of the solemn and affecting rite now so immediately in prospect!

That festival, to the celebration of which you now look forward, has most emphatically been styled the *feast of love!* It is a *spiritual* feast appointed and prepared by Him who, in all respects, proved himself to be the best and kindest friend of man, and of which *none* may partake but such as *love him and love one another!*

"Brethren," says Christ, "hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another." Therefore be ye all persuaded, from henceforth, to "lay aside all guile and malice, and envyings, and hypocrisies, and evil-speakings; and, like new-born babes, desire ye the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," and so eventually "save your own souls!" Amen.

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE THIRD CENTENARY OF THE REFORMATION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE COLLEGE CHURCH, OCTOBER 4, 1835,

By the Rev. JAMES GIBSON,

One of the Ministers of the College Church, Glasgow.

"*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*—GAL. v. 1.

I HAVE chosen this text for the purpose of directing our thoughts somewhat suitably to the occasion to which I alluded last Lord's day, viz., the commemoration of the third centenary, or 300th anniversary of the Reformation from Popery. The Reformation began in different countries at different dates, and different events in it

occurred at different periods in the same country, so that it is difficult to fix upon any particular day or era in which to commemorate it. The 4th of October of this year has been fixed upon by many in Great Britain as the day on which, in the year 1535, was published the first entire Protestant English version of the Bible, being now three hundred years since, and to which we may well date all our most valuable civil, as well as religious, privileges.

This day will accordingly be very generally observed with exercises suited to such an occasion in the churches of Great Britain, national as well as in many dissenting. It has been enjoined by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, on the ministers within their bounds, by some other Presbyteries in Scotland, and will be observed, very generally, by the ministers of our Church. The Reformation from Popery is in itself a time much to be remembered, and of such mighty importance, as especially to call for commemoration. The circumstances of the times in which we live, in the bold avowal of popish doctrines, or the defective views entertained of them, and apologies made for them by professing Protestants, either ignorant of their true character, and blinding, demoralizing and despotic tendency, or too indifferent to the interests of divine truth to give themselves any concern about the matter, or too much warped by party-prejudices and interests to take a calm or religious view of them, or acting under a false and spurious charity, differing as far as possible from that of the Gospel, these circumstances, as well as the great increase of popery in Britain and America, the freest and most enlightened nations of the earth, render it very necessary to understand well the nature of our own principles, and of those to which they are opposed. Besides, it was lately recommended by the General Assembly of our Church, that its ministers should direct the attention of their people to the differences between Protestants and Papists, and to our principles and duties as professing Protestants. With this recommendation we have not hitherto complied in this church, and we cannot have a more suitable occasion of doing so than is this day presented to us.

The text directs our minds immediately to that spiritual liberty which Christ bestows upon all who truly believe in his name It was not a liberty of licentiousness which men in every age have claimed, to do, speak, and think as they list. It was not a liberty to transgress any of the divine commands. On the contrary, he declared, that he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil; to reveal and establish them by clearer sanctions, and in a more spiritual and extensive meaning. It was not a liberty to maintain any system of opinions, or any form of worship which men might devise. On the contrary, he declared, that his freedom could only be obtained by the truth: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;" and that all lying and falsehood was of the devil; and he declared, moreover, that the reason why the Jews did not understand his speech nor believe his truth was, that they were of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they would do. John viii. 44—47.

This liberty is not mere civil freedom, or civil privileges and immunities, though certainly, if universally diffused among men, it would break all bonds, and destroy every yoke; and nothing else ever will do so, because all tyranny, misery, and oppression, spring from iniquity—from human wickedness, and nothing will set men free from it but the liberty of Christ. Liberty is in every man's mouth, and in none more frequently than in the mouths of the wicked and ungodly, who are themselves the slaves of corruption; and while they continue such, cannot be the children of freedom. Would mankind but learn the true liberty of Christ's freemen—the liberty about which so many talk, but the true foundations and real nature of which so few understand, would follow as a matter of course.

The liberty with which Christ makes his people free is of great extent and inconceivable value. The apostle, in our text, opposes it to a system of will worship and self-righteousness, of ceremonial and legal observances, which, as Peter says, "neither they nor their fathers were able to bear," and which certain Judaizing teachers sought to impose on the Galatians, and against which Paul vehemently contended, assuring them that if they submitted to it, and were again entangled in this yoke of bondage, Christ would profit them nothing." In short, that though they pretended to honour the name of Christ, and to be baptized into the Christian faith, yet if they set up a scheme of self-righteousness and will worship of their own, his merits would avail nothing for their salvation. In other words, they would

still remain sinners, condemned to the everlasting punishment of God's righteous law; for he that will seek justification by the law must be judged by the law. So that Paul, speaking by the spirit of God, did not esteem it a small matter to have an erroneous belief, or an erroneous form of worship. On the contrary, he declared, "If any man preach any other gospel than that we have preached, let him be anathema maranatha;" and though it becomes not a mortal man, uninspired, to consign to destruction a fellow mortal, and to pronounce an anathema upon him, yet we are bound to declare, on the authority of God's word, that men cannot be saved, but through the truth as it is in Jesus, and it is for every man, as he values the authority of God and his own eternal salvation, to see well to it that he is believing what God himself has revealed as the way of salvation.

In opposition to the yoke of bondage sought to be imposed upon them, the apostle exhorts the Galatians "to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free." The nature of this liberty, I cannot now fully illustrate, I have done it on former occasions from other texts, but shall just barely enumerate some of the things in which it consists.

It consists, 1st. In deliverance from the ignorance, superstition, and cruelty of false religions, which degrade, oppress, and enslave the human mind, and make it the victim of vain terrors, and impure desires and practices; in the deliverance from a yoke of ceremonial observances, which necessary as they might be in shadowing forth the blessings of the gospel, yet as compared with its free, enlarged, and generous spirit, is uniformly represented by the apostles as a burden too grievous to be borne. It is a deliverance from the bondage of the moral law, not as a rule of life, for this is perfect freedom, but as a covenant of works, both as a mean of attaining to eternal life, and as having a condemning power over the sinner, because he who is Christ's freeman receives justification, not by works of merit or obedience to the law, but at once and entirely through the righteousness of Christ, and to him also there is now no condemnation. The conscience is thus freed from the terror of divine wrath, and the spirit from a slavish labouring after pleasing God by works stained with imperfection and sin. He has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is freed, moreover, not only from the condemning power of the law, but from the reigning power of sin, by the regenerating operation of the Spirit of God, by which he has a new and divine nature, according to which he serves God in newness of life and enlargement of heart. "Truly, O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds." Farther, it is a deliverance from the power of Satan, from death and the grave, in the enlarged and joyful hope of eternal life. So that when the "Son makes us free, we are free indeed."

Such is an outline of the nature of the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free; and I do not think that I shall be wandering far from the scope of my text, or in any degree overstraining it, if I proceed to show, as the groundwork of our thanksgivings this day, that by the possession of the word of God and the light of Protestant truth, we now enjoy a liberty which we do well highly to prize and eagerly to guard. Standing fast in it, and striving earnestly that we be not again "entangled in the yoke of bondage."

In order to understand fully the nature of our privileges, it is necessary that we should know something of the yoke or bondage from which we have escaped. To describe at any length, within the limits of a sermon or two, that which has taken many volumes of history, and as many of controversial theology, would be impossible. The light of eternity alone will unfold the full blackness of the mystery of iniquity; and I shall endeavour, therefore, to confine myself to two or three points in which the Church of Rome infringed on the spiritual liberty of Christ's people, and made traffic of the souls of men, and enslaved their persons, and claimed authority over their judgments, properties, and lives; arrogating a power which can be claimed by God alone, and showing itself as God, in the place of God. This I shall endeavour to do under three points.

1st. The rule of faith, or the standard of belief.

2d. The way of justification.

3d. The rule and principles of morals.

At the period of the Reformation, the corruptions of the Romish Church had arrived at an enormous height. A great variety of causes, operating from a very early period of the history of the Christian Church, such as the self-righteous and superstitious notions, the voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, of which even Paul speaks, the fantastic follies of the eastern

philosophy, the acquisition of immense wealth bestowed upon ecclesiastics by the voluntary superstition of ignorant and barbarous men, expecting to atone for the crimes of violent times by their munificence to those who were supposed to possess the keys of heaven, and the confusion and manifold disorders and miseries that fell upon Europe at the breaking up of the unweildy mass of the overgrown and despotic Roman empire, all these contributed to foster the enormities of the Popish Church, to establish its sway over the minds of men, and to sink them in utter degeneracy, darkness, and profligacy; a state which required only to have the light of religious truth let in upon it to arouse men's minds and to bring the system to ruin.

One great cause, and at the same time, effect of this state of things, was the sealing up of the word of God—the source of divine truth—which, as we have seen, according to our Saviour's decision, can alone make free. Universal ignorance of the word of God prevailed. There was literally a famine of the word of God, and a famine of which men, though dying of it, felt not the pressure. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. It was not dispelled by the transient light of Wickliffe's translation of the New Testament in our land. His bones were disinterred and burnt, his work condemned, and his followers put to death. Nor by the flames of the martyred bodies of Jerome of Prague and John Huss, who were treacherously put to death in despite of public engagements. After their death the threatened light was quenched, and darkness seemed to have resumed its sway. Few even of the clergy could read, they could only con over their dreary and heartless services by rote. Discoveries in science and literature were proscribed and punished. The Bible was almost unknown. The Greek language was pronounced heretical in some countries, because it revealed the long hidden treasures of the Bible. Masses, alms, indulgences, penances, and pilgrimages to tombs, relics, and holy wells were the way to heaven. At last, in the good providence of God, in the time of the learned, voluptuous, infidel, and profligate Pope Leo X., iniquity and imposture overshot the mark, and the shameless profligacy which had so long made merchandise of men's souls, became so enormous as to be too obvious even to that ignorant age. In the solitude of his convent, God was preparing a man who had an eye to see, a heart to perceive, and a tongue to denounce the enormous imposture. To supply the exhausted coffers of a luxurious extravagant, and profligate pope, indulgences for every crime and for every guilt, were openly and publicly preached in Germany. This excited the attention and the indignation of Dr. Martin Luther, professor of theology in the university of Wirtemberg in Saxony. He was led no doubt by the spirit of God, whom the great Head of the Church promised to send, to guide his people into all truth, to a particular examination by that unerring test, the word of God, not only of the system of indulgences, but the authority of the pope and the church by whom they were published. Brought to such a test their iniquity was manifest. The discovery of one set of errors led to the discovery of more, and the whole fabric of delusion, superstition, wickedness, and oppression was exposed by the light of God's word, and a deadly wound given to antichrist. I need not detail the various contests on the part of Luther, his dangers, his protection by the Elector of Saxony in a lonely castle, where he prosecuted his translation of the scriptures, his publication in the German language of the whole Bible: the awakening of all Europe to the question, and the final triumph of Protestantism in many lands, in spite of all the treachery, violence, persecution, and bloodshed with which its enemies endeavoured to strangle it. It is calculated that "not fewer than *fifty millions* of Protestants were put to death during these persecutions," and *that*, besides the thousands of the poor devoted and faithful Waldenses in the valleys and mountains of Piedmont, before the Reformation, and the multitude of wretched blinded heathen massacred in South America by the avaricious savages of Spain, under the banner of the cross, dyed by the blood of men, and led on by blood-thirsty persecuting priests, whose feelings were steeled and brutalized by a horrid superstition. We are often told in these days that all sects persecuted, and because a solitary instance can be pointed to in which Protestants in the violence of political frenzy, have condemned a fellow creature to death, and that too for his opinions; and though contrary to the whole genius of Protestantism, and to its whole feelings, opinions, and practice, it is most falsely pretended that Popery is no more cruel than any other religion, while its very spirit, and recorded, avowed, authorized doctrines are persecuting and bloody, and

have been so fearfully followed out in practice. In spite of these persecutions, Protestantism triumphed. The Bible was published by the labours of the venerable Englishman, Myles Coverdale, made bishop of Exeter by the pious, enlightened, though youthful monarch, Edward VI., complete and entire on the 4th October, 1535. The Reformation had by this time spread in most of the countries of Europe. Our own land had its struggles and its martyrs, and dreadful were the sufferings of our fathers, not only at the first, but what has been called the Second Reformation, when Episcopacy was attempted to be forced on this land by two tyrannical princes, who were Papists in their hearts, the one of whom lived a profligate life and died in the Romish faith, and the other both lived and died a bigoted Papist, and pretended, as the Roman Catholics do now, to be a strenuous advocate for the toleration of all sects, while he was busily compassing their enslavement and destruction.

But what I wish you particularly to observe is, that the Bible, the whole word of God, was the great instrument by which such mighty changes were accomplished. It was the armoury from which the champions of the Reformation drew their most formidable weapons, and which Luther and others launched with such sure and deadly effect against the mass of intricate and mysterious iniquity. The great distinguishing principle of Protestantism is the sufficiency of the sacred Scriptures as the rule of faith, and the right of every man to possess them whole and entire, and to exercise his private judgment on their contents, and his obligation to be guided by them alone in all matters of faith and practice, responsible only to God that he examines them faithfully, humbly, sincerely, and with prayer to God for the guidance of his Spirit. That the Scriptures are thus the alone rule of faith, they themselves abundantly declare; whereas the Romish church claims an equal authority for unwritten tradition, for apocryphal books, and arrogates to itself the sole and exclusive right to interpret the same infallibly, and without possibility of error, claims which are alike impious and insulting to God and his word, and dangerous and destructive to the souls of men. Thus in the creed of Pope Pius IV., published in the year 1564, and which contains *twelve new articles*, and consequently exposes to ridicule the claim of the Romish Church to superior antiquity over the religion of Protestants, which is found in the Bible, and which creed is universally received by every true Roman Catholic, it is declared, "I most steadfastly admit and embrace the apostolical and ecclesiastical *traditions*, with the rest of the CONSTITUTIONS and observations of the same church." Act. 13. "All saving truth," Bellarmine affirms, "is NOT contained in the Holy Scriptures, but partly in the Scripture and partly in unwritten *traditions*; which whosoever doth not receive with like piety and reverence, as he doth the Scriptures, is accursed!" (Concil. Trid. Sess. 4. Decret. de Can. Scrip.)

Now observe the impiety of these decisions, in venturing to arraign the wisdom of the Almighty, and to dare to say that all saving truth is NOT contained in the Holy Scripture, and contrary to what God asserts in his own infallible word; when he says, "The law of the Lord is perfect." Ps. xix. 7. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Rom. xv. 4. "Ye shall NOT *add* unto the word which I command you." Deut. iv. 2. "Every word of God is pure." "Add thou not unto his word, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Prov. xxx. 5. 6. And yet the Romish Church dares presumptuously to ADD its vain traditions, and which traditions that Church has never declared what or where they are. The Scriptures never refer to any such traditions; but they say, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Is. viii. 20. "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Luke xvi. 29. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased hear ye him." Matt. xvii. 5. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. Jesus Christ condemned the doctrine of traditions. Mark vii. 7—9—13. "Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said into them, Full

well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye." 2 Thess. ii. 15. "Hold fast the traditions which ye have been taught; whether by word or our epistle," simply means in the Greek, by our word or epistle; in other words, to believe what the Apostle taught them.

In regard to the sacred canon, this church recognises the apocryphal books thus: "If any one doth not receive all these books, (*i. e.* the apocryphal books, which are intermixed with the genuine and canonical books,) with every part of them, as they used to be read in the (Roman) Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the ancient vulgar Latin edition, (a mere translation) for holy and canonical, and shall knowingly contemn the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema." (Con. Trid. Sess. 4, de Can. Scrip.) Now this is contrary to the preceding declarations of God's own word; and, moreover, these apocryphal books contain fabulous stories, contradictory statements and doctrines, and the most flagitious morals, speaking in praise of lying, suicide, and assassination, and were never received as sacred Scripture in primitive times.

Now, what is the reason why the Romish Church is thus anxious to confound the rule of faith, and to introduce traditions and apocryphal books? It must be to serve some end. Ignorance, and superstition, and vice, are often so besotted as to commit the greatest sins and follies, without any reason or advantage to themselves. In this case there *is* a reason, and it is this, to sanction a farther claim which the Church of Rome arrogates to itself, and on which it builds its most formidable tyranny; and that is, to set itself up as the sole interpreter of Scripture and depositary of saving knowledge, and thus to arrogate all power over the minds and consequently bodies of men, and to destroy all right of private judgment and liberty of conscience.

Thus the creed of Pope Pius, Act. 2, runs thus, and observe every Roman Catholic, lay or clerical, owns this creed: "I also receive the Holy Scriptures according to that sense which the Holy Mother Church (to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures) DID, and doth hold. Nor will I ever take and interpret it otherwise than according to the unanimous sense of the Fathers," which, in short, is perfect nonsense. What does any poor ignorant Roman Catholic know of the writings of the fathers, one of whose writings he has never seen in any language under the sun? The writings of the fathers are numerous, and contradictory, and there is no such thing as an unanimous sense; but, of course, every man who will swallow this article, must believe any thing that the priest pleases to impose; for neither he nor they can read and discover the unanimous sense of the fathers. Again, (Conc. Trid. Sess. 4. Decret. de edit. et usu sacrorum librorum,) "In matters of faith and morals, and whatever relates to the maintenance of Christ's doctrine, NO ONE, confiding in his own judgment, SHALL DARE to wrest the sacred Scriptures to his own sense of them, contrary to that which hath been held by holy Mother Church, whose right it is to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of holy writ, or contrary to the unanimous consent of the fathers, *even though such interpretations should never be published.*" Did ever presumption equal this in its demands on the credulity of mankind! It is added "If any disobey, let them be denounced by the ordinaries, and punished according to law."

Such claims are destructive of all use of our judgment and conscience in religion, as much so as if we were brute animals, to be led or driven by the owners even though it should be to the slaughter. It is needless to say that they are as contrary to God's word as to common sense. Thus says Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 2. "Not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Where is *every* man's conscience, his judgment and moral sense, if he must take it according to the unknown and *unpublished* sense of the fathers. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1 Thess. v. 21. If we *prove* or try, we must use our judgment, and have a test or standard. Such an instruction is absurd on the popish doctrine. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John iv. 1. "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." 1 Cor. x. 15; see also 1 Pet. iii. 15; Gal. i. 8.

In perfect consistency with the above dogmas, hath this church ventured to prohibit the free reading of the Scriptures; but, indeed, if the laity *dare* not interpret them, it matters little whether they possess them or not. The man who is in danger of damnation, if

he should take any meaning out of the Scriptures which may be contrary to the unknown, unexisting, and therefore unpublished judgment of the church, will not be very anxious to read the Bible. On this point the Church of Rome declares, in the 4th rule of the Index of prohibited books, prepared by order of the Council of Trent, as follows :—"Inasmuch as it is manifest, from experience, that if the Holy Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it." And then it goes on to declare, that a *written* permission must be obtained, and that booksellers publishing Bibles shall receive certain punishments, and so on.

Compare with this daring prohibition the following scriptures :—John v. 39 ; Eph. vi. 17 ; Col. iii. 16. See the addresses of Paul's epistles, which are not to the priests or ministers of any name, but to the "churches of God, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and to all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. i. 7 ; 1 Cor. i. 2 , Gal. i. 2 ; Eph. i. 1 ; and yet are churches not to be permitted to read the epistles thus addressed to them ? James i. 1 ; 1 Pet. i. 1 ; 1 John i. 12, 13 ; Acts xvii. 11 ; Deut. vi. 7—9.

Some may suppose that these are antiquated dogmas ; and even Roman Catholics may affirm, that their practice is contrary to all this—that it is to say, that their practice is contrary to their sworn creed, a thing not very creditable. But their practice is not contrary to their creed, and not one of them will affirm that their Church is changed in any thing, and those Protestants who are willing to believe it, contrary to their own affirmations, have no small portion of credulity ; as said by the Rev. Mr. Hall, "we persist in maintaining that the adherents to Popery are materially changed, in contradiction to their express disavowal, and while they boast of the infallibility of their creed, and the unalterable nature of their religion, we persist in the belief of its having experienced we know not what amelioration and improvement. In most instances, where men are deceived, it is the effect of art and contrivance on the part of those who delude them. In this the deception originates with ourselves, and instead of bearing false witness against our neighbour, such is the excess of our candour, that we refuse to credit the unfavourable testimony he bears of himself."

The very same doctrines, in respect to the scriptures, were published no later than 1824, in a reserip of Pope Leo XII., and repeated, by the Popish clergy of Ireland, with the stamp of their approbation, saying, his holiness *wisely* remarks, that from the indiscriminate reading of the scriptures more harm than good will arise. Indeed prefixed to the Douay translation of the Bible printed in this city, and authorized by the Scotch Popish bishops, is an admonition most strictly prohibiting the free reading of the Scriptures. I need not attempt to prove, as it would be easy to do, from the sanction given by the Popish clergy of Ireland to a work of theology, containing its darkest, most oppressive, superstitious, and inconceivably immoral principles that it is still unchanged. The effect is, alas ! unhappily seen in Ireland, in the violent and open persecutions of Protestants, in the murder of bible readers, and the threatenings of bigoted priests.

Let me then in the conclusion of this head, while urging you to express your gratitude to Almighty God, that you are so far freed from the yoke of bondage, that you possess the word of God, urge you also to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Be not seduced by the false pretensions to liberality now so prevalent. The danger of being again entangled is not so small as some imagine. The progress of Popery has been rapid. There is uncommon activity and zeal manifested by Papists in propagating their opinions. The children of the poor are taught by them gratuitously, and many Protestant children are thus entangled. The state of political parties has given them a dangerous ascendency. They are undoubtedly aided from abroad. Since 1829, from twenty-three to thirty new places of worship have been built in Scotland.

I bear no feeling of hatred to the persons of Papists, but from all that I have read, and thought, and observed of that fearful system, I hesitate not to express the strongest detestation of it. Stand fast in the liberty of using God's word. Agree to nothing that could either fetter or curtail it. Let it be the determination of every one who values Christian truth to contend for the freedom and integrity of God's word. This it was under God that has given us so many public, social and private blessings. It was the great instrument of destroying religious, and as a consequence, civil despotism, in connexion with some of those truths and doctrines afterwards to be noticed.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES GIBSON, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER NICOL, Aberdeen.

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE THIRD CENTENARY OF THE REFORMATION;

A Sermon by the Rev. JAMES GIBSON.—*Concluded.*

You will remember that I stated in the former part of the day, that I had chosen this text for the purpose of directing our thoughts somewhat suitably to an object to which I had alluded last Sabbath, viz., the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the Reformation from Popery. After some preliminary remarks, I gave a short outline of the nature of the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, and then said that we should not be wandering from the scope of the text, or in any degree overstraining it, if I should proceed to show as the groundwork of our thanksgiving this day, that by the possession of the word of God and the light of Protestant truth, we now enjoy a liberty which we do well highly to prize and eagerly to guard, standing fast in it, and striving earnestly that we "be not again entangled in the yoke of bondage."

We said that in order to understand fully the nature of our privileges, it is necessary that we know something of the bondage from which we have escaped. To describe at any length within the limits of a sermon or two, that which has taken many volumes of history, and as many of controversial theology would be impossible. The light of eternity alone will unveil the full blackness of the mystery of iniquity, and I shall endeavour, therefore, to confine myself to two or three points in which the Church of Rome infringed on the spiritual liberty of Christ's people, and made traffic of the souls of men, enslaved their persons, and claimed uncontrolled and absolute authority over their judgments, properties, and lives; arrogating a power which can be claimed by God alone, and showing itself as God, saying, that it is in the place of God.

This we were to do under these heads.

I. The rule of faith, or the standard of belief.

II. The way of justification.

III. The rule and principle of morals.

The first of these I have already handled, and shall now proceed to the

II. The way of justification or acceptance before God.

I have selected this head as the second point by which we may arrive at some knowledge of the bondage in which the Romish Church held its votaries, and of the liberty wherewith we are now made free, because it will be seen that almost the whole mass of error and absurdity which that Church has heaped up to blind and enslave mankind, may be traced to an error on this vital point, viz., the way of a sinner's acceptance with God. Hence Luther called it the doctrine of a falling or standing church; that a church was spiritually alive or dead just in proportion as this doctrine was rightly or erroneously understood. With a sinner condemned by the law of God, and condemned in his own conscience, feeling that he hath violated God's law, and that in consequence he is liable to his almighty wrath, actuated by guilty fears, anticipating a future judgment, and apprehensive of everlasting punishment, if he have any serious thoughts about his future safety, one of the first things that must concern him is how he can find acceptance with God. Hence all men, in every condition

of ignorance, or barbarism, or wickedness have had some way by which they expected to find acceptance with God, and it is remarkable that self-righteousness has characterized them all; that they have all thought of appeasing God by some costly sacrifice, laborious and painful penances, or *doing* something which they thought would be acceptable to the God they worshipped; *that* something might be characterized by cruelty, or even impurity, provided it would please the God they had formed for themselves.

It is this self-righteous spirit, this doctrine of human merit, that is the chief characteristic of the Romish faith. It is not the unmixed merit of the heathen; that could not well be after the word of God was professedly received; but it is in reality as plainly and offensively maintained. They define justification to be "a translation from a state of sin to a state of habitual grace, and of the adoption of the sons of God by Jesus Christ our Lord." Dens, tom. II. 446. That is to say, that the person is not only declared righteous in the sight of God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted on account of the righteousness of Christ, but actually made righteous, and thereby entitled to salvation. That, in short, his sin itself is actually taken away, and, therefore, the Council of Trent declares, Can. 10, 11, sess. 6, "If any one deny that by the grace of Christ, which is confessed in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; or even assert that the whole of that which constitutes the true and proper nature or essence of sin is not taken away, but says, that it is only blotted out or not imputed, let him be accursed." Observe that this definition makes the sinner to be accepted on account of his inherent righteousness, and not on account of the righteousness of Christ, accounted ours, and thus robs the Redeemer of his glory. It is this that makes the doctrine of purgatory necessary; because as it is plain that no man is perfect on earth, though the Roman Church maintains that perfection may be attained, there must be some way by which the soul may be purified before it can be admitted into the presence of God, and this they say is done in purgatory, but of this I shall speak hereafter.

In reference to the doctrine of justification directly, the creed of pope Pius, which observe every Roman Catholic must accept as his creed, says, "I embrace and receive all things and every thing which have been defined and declared in the holy Council of Trent, concerning original sin and justification, Art. 4. The Council of Trent decrees, "If any one shall say that men are justified only by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, or only the remission of sins, exclusive of the grace and charity which is poured into the heart by the holy Spirit, and is inherent in him, or that the grace by which we are justified is the favour of God alone; in other words, that it is not something in ourselves and meriting justification, let him be anathema or accursed." Accordingly, this Church farther maintains the doctrine of merit, and defines merit to be a good work, worthy of reward or return, and the Council of Trent, the paramount authority, decrees, (Sess. 6. Cap. 16. Can. 32.) "If any one shall say that the good works of a justified man do not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the actual possession (*consecutionem*) of eternal life itself, and even an increase of glory, let him be accursed."

Such is the open and undisguised avowal of human merit as the means of procuring men eternal life; a doctrine dishonouring to the Saviour, and as we shall see, pregnant with every error and absurdity, and pregnant also with immorality and vice. I trust it is hardly necessary to show how contrary this doctrine is to the doctrine of Christ, the liberty with which Christ sets his people free. Part of that liberty, we have seen, consisted in deliverance from the law as a covenant of works, from slavishly labouring to please God by the sinful and imperfect works of man. But this Popish doctrine sets men a-toiling by their own inventions, to atone for sin, and secure eternal life, a most hopeless work, as well as a work dishonouring to the Saviour, through whose righteousness alone salvation is obtained. It is clear that as all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, all are liable to punishment. It is equally clear that as the law of God is perfect, and pronounces its punishment on the smallest violation, no man can be justified by the works of the law, because he has violated it, and it condemns him. Neither can he be justified partly by his own righteousness or obedience to the law of God, for the scripture declares, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace."

That we are justified by the righteousness

of Christ only, in which by faith we are interested, is most plainly declared in Scripture. Thus "the righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. iii. 22—24; 27, 28. "By grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: NOT of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. ii. 8, 9. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall NO flesh living be justified." Ps. cxliii. 2. "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS: we have done that which it was our duty to do." Luke xvii. 10. How, then, can we merit any thing, if it be true, as declared in the Word of God, that even after we have done *all* that is commanded us, we are still unprofitable servants.

Let us now observe how this popish doctrine of justification by works and human merit must operate.

We have seen that justification is defined to be a translation from a state of sin to a state of grace, that is, as afterwards declared, to a state of inherent righteousness, on account of which the sinner is accepted. If, then, this inherent righteousness is not completed on earth before the person can be admitted into the presence of a holy God, there must be some place of purification. Hence the doctrine of purgatory, with all its absurdities and enormities. Purgatory is defined by Romish writers to be "that place in which the souls of those persons are purified who were not fully cleansed on earth, in order that they may be prepared for heaven, wherein nothing shall enter that defileth." And the creed of Pope Pius IV. Art. 7, says, "I constantly hold that there is a purgatory; and that the souls detained there are assisted by the prayers of the faithful." Con. Trent, Sess. 25, Decret. de Purgat. affirms, that "there is a purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the masses, prayers, alms, and other good works of the living." From this doctrine the people have an abundant source of merit, by the alms, prayers, and good works which they may perform for the dead, and the priests an abundant source of revenue; and no one who is not extensively read in the history of popery, or who has not beheld its operation in countries wholly under the Romish sway, can have any idea of the follies committed in the belief of this doctrine—in the masses and prayers performed by the priest, and paid for by the people, for the relief of their departed relatives, and the legacies left by the dying for the same purpose. Often have I been solicited for money to pay for praying the souls out of purgatory;* and yet men tell us that this religion is changed. We have more charity for this religion than its votaries, for none of them admit any such change. This doctrine was not made an article of Romish belief till 1563.

Observe how derogatory this doctrine is to the honour of Christ, and the efficacy of his blood, and the power of his holy Spirit, attributing to purgatorial fire what is due to him alone! How contrary to the Word of God, which declares, that "it is appointed unto men *once* to die, and after this the judgment," without any intermediate place of purification. "To-day," said our Saviour, "shalt thou be with me in paradise." The dead are utterly unconscious of any thing on this earth, and cannot be benefited by any thing that man can do. Is. xxxviii. 18. "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." Eccl. ix. 5, 6. "The dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." The Scriptures attribute such efficacy to the blood and to the Spirit of Christ, as to destroy altogether the notion of a purgatory, thus washed and sanctified, and justified in Christ's name, and by the Spirit of our God, saved us by the washing of regeneration. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Christ cleanseth from ALL sin." "There is now *no* condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

* Every one who has travelled in the popish countries in the south of Europe, has often seen processions begging for this purpose, as well as monks, and persons fantastically dressed in mock canonicals playing this avocation. Pictures of flames and little figures, to represent souls struggling to get out of the fires, are painted on the churches to excite pity, and thus draw forth money.

" He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25. " I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them." Rev. xiv. 13. Paul had " a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." It is not probable he would have so spoken had it been to go into purgatory.

Out of this doctrine of purgatory and prayers for the dead, next arose the doctrine of indulgences—a doctrine out of which spring the most enormous impositions on the one hand, and vices and crimes on the other. Indulgences are defined to be " a remission of the temporal or temporary punishment due to sin by the decree of God, where its guilt and eternal punishment are remitted, and which may consist either of evil in this life, or of temporal, that is, temporary suffering in the next." Every papist believes this, as declared in their adopted creed, Act 10, " I affirm that the power of indulgences was left by Christ to his church, and that the use of them is very helpful to Christian people." This doctrine was carried, about the time of the Reformation, to a fearful height, though it was only a modern doctrine, not having been claimed by the Popes before the 12th century. Indulgences " from all sins, transgressions, and excesses, how enormous soever they may be," were then sold. They were sold in millions, and at a great price in later times. They are sold at this day, and given for certain services. I myself have seen it done, and possess the copy of one given to the pilgrims at Rome, which I obtained when they were distributing to the poor creatures, who had come from a great distance to receive them. I need not stay to prove what an impious usurpation of the prerogatives of God and his Christ this is. None can forgive sins but God; and how impious to think that the forgiveness of sin, the free gift of God through his Son Jesus Christ, may be purchased for money, or that the merits of dead men are so great and superabundant that they may be sold to atone for the sins of the living.

But as if to take care that God and his Christ were to be sufficiently stripped of their honour, and man sufficiently degraded, they affirm not only that prayers are to be made by the living for the dead, but to the dead for the living. Thus it is said in the creed so often quoted, and which we quote as undeniable authority in the Church of Rome, " I also believe the saints who reign with Christ are to be *venerated* and *invoked*, and that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be adored." It was not till the ninth century that the popes claimed the power of canonizing dead sinful mortals, and making them objects of prayer. But the zeal of succeeding ages made up for the lateness of the invention, and saints that never existed, and rotten bones that never belonged to them have been abundantly adored. The lives of the saints make up fifty-four *massy folio volumes*. Saints have been canonized that were a disgrace to humanity, and for doing actions at which humanity shudders, such as murdering, burning heretics, treason, and rebellion ; and yet these monsters are to be adored! Let none say that these things only *were*. They are still in the avowed recognised creeds and prayer books daily used. I have seen thousands of persons prostrated in the adoration of rotten bones, in the Church of St. Peter's at Rome, and offering money at their shrines ; and I can most conscientiously say that the Virgin Mary and the saints are more devoutly worshipped than the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* It may be said that they are only invoked as helps to us, and as Papists say, if we ask men to pray for us here, why may we not ask men to pray for us in heaven. The reason is, God has forbidden the one, and commanded the other, because the one is idolatry and the other is not ; and, moreover, it is investing creatures with omniscience, as if they knew our thoughts and desires, which none can do but God. We can ask by word or letters a fellow-man to pray for us through the mediation of the Redeemer, but we can neither by word or letter convey this knowledge to dead men.

How contrary is all this to the word of God, " Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." " There is *one* Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. " If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." " There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved." Worshipping of angels and men is expressly pro-

* The present Pope calls the Virgin " His greatest confidence, even the whole foundation of his hope "

hibited. Col. iv. 18. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and WORSHIPPING OF ANGELS." Acts x. 25. "As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, stand up; I myself also am a man." Rev. xix. 10. "And I fell at his feet to worship him." Now what can be thought of the hardihood and iniquity of the man who could take these words as is done by the late Bishop Doyle, in his catechism, who quoted these words in proof of saint worship, leaving out the words that follow, "and he said unto me, See thou do it not." And as another specimen of this sort of dealing, the second commandment is left out, and the tenth divided into two. Closely connected with these points is the worship of images, pilgrimages to the tombs of supposed saints, or relics. Single bones are preserved and exhibited, as we have seen them, in gold and silver shrines. These are all authorized in the creed and Council so often referred to; but I must pass on, merely observing, that were I to recount the ridiculous legends detailed and believed on all these points, to describe the superstitious practices and puerile mummeries, lying miracles, and painful pilgrimages and penances undertaken, of which I have not only read, but which I have seen, many days would not suffice.

There is one other doctrine to which I will advert for one moment, viz., the doctrine of transubstantiation and the mass. Using still the same authorities, though not formally quoting them, for brevity's sake. "In the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there is really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ." "I profess that in the mass offered is a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the quick (the living) and the dead." Art. 15. They are pronounced accursed who deny this. Now, only think of the grossness and impiety of the assertion, that a wicked mortal can turn a bit of senseless paste, stirred, boiled, spread out, and cut by the hands of a priest, into Christ himself, and that this bit of paste so prepared is God,* and that when consecrated by the mummery of the priest, it is a true sacrifice for the living and even the dead in purgatory. I shall not detail to you all the rules for performing mass, and all the ways by which it may be defective, as laid down in the Roman Missal, such as the intention of the priest being unfavourable, the wafer being made not of pure wheaten flour, or the wine being corrupted, or if as they even ridiculously provide for the wafer being eaten by a mouse, or vomited by the priest or person taking it, or the blood, as they call it, being spilt, and the priest commanded to lick it up. What horrible abomination! How degrading to the Son of God! There are only two ways of accounting for it. 1st. The wickedness and delusion of Satan, who has set it up to dishonour God's Son, and the wickedness of men under his influence, who have set it up to exalt themselves; because if a priest can create God, whom men are to fall down and worship in his presence, as I have seen them do prostrate in the mire of the streets before the host, if he can make a sacrifice for the sins of men, which will have effect according to his favourable intention, what unhappy creature, believing all this, will dare dispute his power? In fact he is a god to him, or as their own books say, in the place of God. I need not stay to show how totally contrary to scripture, as well as common sense, such doctrines are. Read only the following passages:—Heb. vii. 26,

* Mr. Nangle, in his Letters to Dr M'Hale, says—"The writer is personally acquainted with a poor woman in this country, who was delivered from the influence of Popery in the following remarkable manner:—A friar one day came into her cabin, and, after the usual salutations had passed between them, he called for a saucepan. Placing the vessel on the fire, with a little water in it, he took out of his pocket a paper containing some flour, which he poured into the saucepan, stirring it round, 'as if,' to use my informant's words, 'he was making stirabout.' When the paste was thickened to the consistence of wax, he ordered his hostess to provide him two smoothing-irons; and having pressed the paste between these instruments to the thinness of a wafer, he cut it into round pieces with a scissors, and then, holding up one of these pieces, he said—' When I have consecrated this, whoever will not believe it to be the very body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ, will be damned to all eternity!!!' It has been observed, that there is but a step between the sublime and the ridiculous—the transition from superstition to scepticism may be equally rapid; it was so in the mind of the friar's hostess—he had passed the bound, and the spell was broken. 'I thought it,' said she, 'such folly and wickedness to say, that the thing which the friar carried in his pocket in a bit of paper—which I saw boiled in a saucepan on the fire—pressed out between two smoothing-irons, and clipped with a scissors, was God, and that I should trust in it and worship it, that I determined never to enter a chapel again.' The poor woman, notwithstanding much persecution, has adhered to her resolution; and I would advise my Roman Catholic countrymen to follow her example; for, however Dr. M'Hale and his more talented colleagues in the priesthood may exhibit superior tact in the manufacture of the wafer idol, and cast a cloud of mystery around the wheaten deity, by a more dexterous management of their hocus pocus, yet their god is no better than the friar's. The words of the Prophet are as applicable to the one as to the other: 'The workman made it, therefore it is not God.' Hosea viii. 6."

27. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." Heb. ix. 24—28. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world;) but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." Heb. ix. 12. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Heb. x. 14. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

I have not mentioned the doctrine of auricular confession, or confession in the ear of a priest, by which the Church of Rome enjoins, upon pain of anathema, the confession of every sin in thought, word, and deed, and instructs the priest to question the degraded devotee on the most secret thoughts, feelings, desires, and passions of humanity, to an extent more immoral and disgusting than it is possible to declare, and this, no doubt, that the creature thus degraded, may be in the entire power and mercy of the priest. I have not spoken of extreme unction, by which the priest can forgive the venial sins of the dying, nor of the supremacy of the church by which it claims power over all churches, over all baptized persons, to seize them, compel them to receive the faith, or suffer punishment, imprisonment, confiscation of goods, and even death, though it is not always convenient to enforce this horrible right which it claims; of the power claimed by the pope, over states, emperors, kings, and princes, to absolve subjects from their allegiance as the vicar of Christ. If any one deny that these doctrines are maintained by the Church of Rome, we can only say he denies it in utter ignorance of her creeds and authorized books. If any Roman Catholic denies that he receives them, though in their books, then he is either renouncing his own creed, or using one of those falsehoods for his Church, which that church in its pernicious morality permits and sanctions.

This brings us to notice very shortly the

III. Point, viz., the rule and principle of morals.

It might be supposed, that persons who had such notions of the merit of human actions to obtain the favour of God and even eternal life, as we have already seen, could have no very high notions of the purity, extent, and immutable obligation of the divine law, and that there were circumstances in which the demands of that perfect law might be dispensed with. Accordingly, the Church of Rome makes a distinction in morals, viz., the distinction of venial and mortal sin—that some sins are pardonable, and others not, that is, even in justified persons. Thus, Conc. Trent. Sess. 5. Canons 25 and 27. "If any one shall say, that a righteous man sins in every good work, at least venially, or which is more intolerable mortally, let him be accursed." "If any one shall say, that there is no *mortal* sin, except infidelity, or that grace once received cannot be lost by any other sin than infidelity, however great and enormous, let him be accursed." Observe that some sins are venial, and do not imply the loss of grace, or, as they express it, "does not infer the spiritual death of the soul,' and only induces "the guilt of temporal punishment." A sin "may become venial, from the kind or species, from the smallness of the matter, from an imperfect deliberation or imperfection of the act." And the following are some of the instances given: idle words, a jocular or officious lie, emotions of hatred or of manslaughter, when the act is not completed, "the stealing of a penny," "small excess in drinking;" and to give all due license in these matters, it is declared, "that many venial sins cannot constitute one mortal sin, because they differ altogether in their nature." Dens, vol. I. How contrary to the declarations of Scripture, which say, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." "Every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment!" And our Saviour makes murder and adultery to consist in the very thoughts of the heart.

On the doctrine of oaths, it will not be necessary to enter fully. Various ways are mentioned, in which the obligation of an oath ceases; and the question is asked, To whom the power of dispensing with an oath is competent? and it is answered, To the Pope, and to the bishops, though not to parish priests. And the doctrine is laid down, that oaths to interfere with the welfare of the Church are perjuries—that a succeeding oath cannot absolve from a former one; and as every Roman Catholic is bound by an oath to his church, therefore any other which militates with the first is a perjury, and therefore not binding.

Brethren, you will easily see why it is necessary to shut up the light of the Bible, in a church maintaining such doctrines and such morals. They could not long abide the light of heavenly truth.

After this outline of the nature of the bondage from which we have been delivered, surely it is unnecessary to say that gratitude well becomes us for our glorious privileges. Circumstances attended the Reformation from popery, so very singular in the preservation of its great champions in different countries, of Luther in Germany and of Knox in our country, amid all the snares laid for their lives, and the enemies that thirsted for their blood, in the infidel indifference of the reigning Pope, to the ravings, as he thought, of an obscure German monk, in disposing the hearts of good princes and nobles, and the worldly interests of bad, so as to cause them all to combine to the promotion of the great cause of Protestantism, such as to call for the recognition of the hand of God even from historians not much disposed to behold his hand in the government of the world. While gratitude is due to the Almighty, the first great source of all good, light and life, to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, to the blessed Spirit who takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them unto us, and who showered down so abundantly his precious gifts on the churches of the Reformation, gratitude is due also to the men whom God chose as his instruments to work out his will; and though we are not permitted to render them idolatrous veneration, or to believe that they can merit favour to us, being themselves the partakers of free redeeming grace, and now ascribing all to the Son of God, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" yet we are permitted to cherish their great names with respect and attachment, and are bound to be "followers of them who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And, my friends, how pitiful is it to think that there are many shallow-minded and irreligious persons who affect to consider these men as a sort of religious barbarians, without learning and without the gentler feelings of humanity. They were men assuredly who considered the glory of God and the salvation of immortal souls from eternal condemnation, and the deliverance of mankind from civil and spiritual bondage, as of more importance than the frivolities of human courtesy, but men whose learning has seldom been equalled, and scarcely ever surpassed—whose generous self-devotedness and disinterested relinquishment of all personal advantages for the welfare of souls, and the good of their several countries, and whose enduring legacies of blessings have never been excelled by uninspired man. And who are the persons who thus manifest so little gratitude to these men? Men, some of whom though men of learning, were irreligious and infidel, frivolous and selfish, who never lost an hour's repose for the benefit of their country, and whose names, though they may survive, will be remembered, as men remember those who have played their part on the stage of time for the amusement of their fellows, but have left no lasting benefit behind. Many of them are persons, utterly ignorant of history, of religion and human nature, and who expect to get the character of enlightened, by laughing at all that has gone before them. Let us, my friends, judge more truly; let us cherish a grateful remembrance of them; let us, above all, cherish their enduring principles. "If the Reformation was worth obtaining, it is worthy maintaining." Make yourselves acquainted with its principles, they are a precious treasure. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." There is danger to it, be assured, in the prevalence of false principles, and in the advance of Popery. The best security I can suggest is, that ye be Christ's freemen indeed, and grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE DUTY OF HAVING A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD MEN;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER NICOL,

Aberdeen.

"*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*"—Acts xxiv. 16.

Never did a clear conscience appear to be of greater advantage than in the situation in which Paul stood when he pronounced the words which we have just now read to you. The accusation wherewith he was charged could not have been more weighty or heinous; because he was accused of sedition, of impiety, of attempting to raise a tumult among the Jews, and of profaning the temple. That his case was not considered as a common and ordinary one, but ranked among those of greater consequence, which could not be judged at Jerusalem, would appear from his being carried to Cesarea, before the governor of the province. His opponents could not have been more powerful, or vested with greater authority. Ananias the High Priest, and the elders, had gone down in person to Cesarea to support by their presence and influence, the cause against our Apostle. The witnesses could not have been more prejudiced nor more dangerous. They were composed of a multitude of Jews, animated with a zeal for their law, who believed that they were doing God good service, in persecuting a man who had done injury to religion by new doctrines. The advocate they employed could not have been more eloquent nor more cunning. He was the orator Tertullus, who, in this cause, studiously employed all the art of his profession, and all the influence of flattery, to the judge. The judge himself could not have been more suspicious; because Felix was a politician, who, in causes of this kind which regarded sedition, did not so much consider the innocence of the person accused, as the repose of the province and the authority of the emperor. Thus Paul had to struggle against prejudice, power, bigotry, prepossession, eloquence, and reasons of state. And what did he oppose to all these enemies? He appeared alone, without counsel or advocate; and what defence made he? He employed none of the figures of rhetoric; he had not recourse to questions of right; he made use of no learned discussions; he endeavoured not to soften his judge by flattery. He fortified himself in the rectitude of his conscience: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." He appeals from those who persecuted him to the great God, before whom he had walked all his life in sincerity of heart—from the multitude of those who were his enemies, to all the rest of mankind, before whom his conduct had been irreproachable; and he opposes to the artifice of Tertullus and the policy of Felix the purity of his conscience: "I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence." In this conscience I find a witness who clears me, an advocate who pleads for me, a judge who acquits me, and a superior authority which relieves me from all the injustice men can do me. If we were to attempt a panegyric on the apostle Paul, we might view, step by step, this christian hero in all the circumstances of his life, and show, that in no instance he departed from the assertion advanced in our text. But we shall confine ourselves to what will be of more general use, and shall, therefore, consider our text not as it personally regards the apostle Paul, but with respect to the model therein presented to all those who call themselves christians. Our intention is not to give the history of our Apostle's life, but to point out the way for regulating our own.

With this design in view, the following discourse will divide itself into four parts. The first is the principle and the guide of a good man's actions, "A conscience void of offence." The second is the extent of this principle, which respects every thing wherein religion and probity are concerned, God and men, "toward God and toward men." The third is the constancy and perseverance

of this principle, which extends to all the actions of life "always;" and the last is, what we must do, and the vigilance we must practice, in order to have a conscience void of offence, "I exercise myself."

The first thing observable in our text is the principle of a good man's conduct, "a conscience void of offence." The principle which regulates our actions ought to be a conscience void of offence The word conscience is one of those terms which all men understand better than they can express, and which they darken, instead of clearing up, when they attempt to explain it too minutely.

Without, therefore, entering upon those questions, and pretending to decide whether the conscience belongs to the understanding or to the will, to the heart or to the memory, we say that conscience is that inward light which shows us what is right and what is wrong, which judges of our different actions, and then either accuses or excuses us, either acquits or condemns us, terrifies or comforts us, agreeably to the favourable or unfavourable testimony it bears us. A conscience "void of offence," is a conscience so distinct in its knowledge, so wise in its deliberations, so impartial and upright in its decisions, that it pronounces always in favour of what is good and upright; a conscience which, after having thus pronounced, causes a man to act agreeably to its decisions, and induces him to practise those actions it approves, or to shun those which it condemns, in such a manner that he finds nothing within to hurt or molest him; nothing for which he cannot give himself a good account. Now, it is such a conscience that ought to regulate our actions, because without it we are possessed neither of direction in what is our duty, nor of any consolation in life. Without such a conscience we are ignorant of our duty, for all the laws and precepts which God has laid down for the regulation of our conduct, have no power or efficacy but in as far as they are sanctioned to us by the decision of the conscience, and have its impression and seal. God who governs the world by his providence, governs man by the ministry of the conscience, which is as a substitute who speaks for him, who holds his place in our hearts, and is to us instead of the Divinity. God said to Moses, "See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh," *i. e.* thou shalt publish my laws to him, thou shalt enforce the execution of them, and inflict punishment for the breach of them, in my name and in my stead. We may say that God has given a like commission to the conscience to be the interpreter of his will, to second it, and to give it weight by exhortations and remonstrances. Hence the ancient fathers, and even heathen philosophers, have called the conscience an eternal light, a supreme intelligence, that is as a guardian angel to our souls, and serves as our guide and instructor. Hence we conclude, that the man who shakes off the yoke of this interior light, and who regulates not his conduct agreeably to the directions of an upright conscience, is incapable of walking in the right road, has no bridle to check his career, all the steps he takes lead him to guilt and perdition. As the man who is insensible to the sensations of the pain and pleasure which God has conjoined with our corporeal functions, and which serve as monitors that teach us what we ought to shun or to seek after for the accommodation of our outward frame: as such a man would evidently be approaching his dissolution and death, so also the man who does not consult, or who pays no regard to the forebodings, the desires, or the fears of his conscience, gives a mortal wound to his soul, and delivers himself over to all the disorders of sin. For what these perceptions of sense are to the body for its preservation, the same are the suggestions of conscience for the health of the soul, and for its preservation against the temptations which solicit to sin. What then must become of him who has depraved this principle? He will be entangled in all the snares which are laid for him; he will tumble from precipice to precipice, and heap iniquity upon iniquity.

"The light of the body is the eye," says the Son of God, "if, therefore, thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light, but if thine eye be evil thy whole body shall be full of darkness; if, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" The eye in these words, signifies purity of intention, uprightness of conscience, which does the same office in guiding moral actions that the eye does in conducting our outward steps. What our Saviour then, in these words, means, is, that a man's eye, when it loses the faculty of seeing, spreads an universal darkness all around; as the connexion between the inward and the outward light ceases, every thing that presents itself is involved in obscurity, and assumes the tincture of his eye. So the man who is destitute of the inward

light of the conscience walks in darkness, all his actions bear the character of the misguided principle that produces them, and in whatever he does he never fails to offend God. "Every thing that is done without faith is sin," says the apostle Paul, *i. e.* every thing that is done without the assurance, with the integrity of an irreproachable conscience, is sin. Prayers shall, in the language of David, (Ps. cix. 7.) become sin, and in the language of Solomon, (Pr. xxviii. 9.) an abomination; the plowing of the wicked, says the wise man, is sin; things the most indifferent are defiled, all things are impure to the man who is impure. Whatever he touch, whether it be bread, or wine, or oil, or any meat, cannot be sanctified to a man who is defiled by a legal pollution, according to the decision which is recorded in the second chapter of the prophet Haggai, how much more must this be the case in respect to the man who is defiled by moral uncleanness? But the man who regulates himself by a conscience void of offence, finds from within himself a general direction for all his duties, and opens to himself a road which will lead him to virtue and happiness. "The end of the commandment," says the apostle Paul, (1 Tim. i. 5.) "is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." "Let us draw near to God," says the apostle to the Heb. x. 22. "in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

We say, in the second place, that we ought to regulate our actions by a conscience void of offence, because without it we cannot have pleasure in what we do, because without it we expose ourselves to continual misery and unhappiness. How great a misfortune is it to be at variance with one's self, to be drawn asunder by perpetual contradictions, to become one's own tormentor and greatest enemy, to carry in one's own bosom a fire that consumes, a worm that gnaws, without the possibility of getting rid of them. How uneasy a situation is it to hear, in the language of Job xv. 21, "A dreadful sound in one's ears, to be always waited for of the sword," "to be chased," as it is expressed in Levit. xxvi. 36, "by the sound of a shaken leaf," to see the thunders of heaven over one's head, hell open at his feet, and every thing foreboding destruction and ruin. Such was the case of Cain after he had committed murder. The innocent shade of his brother Abel pursued him; its voice had in it something which he could not endure; he wandered as a vagabond not knowing what to do, carrying his remorse over the face of the earth, fleeing from every thing, fleeing even from himself. God must encourage, comfort, and grant him a safeguard. After all this, his conscience more rigorous than God himself could not forgive him; and although there were at that time but few people on the earth, and all of them his brothers and sisters, he fancied to himself an host of enemies, and believed that he saw as many different deaths as different objects, "Every one that findeth me shall slay me." Such was the case of Belshazzar when he profaned the vessels of the temple, surrounded by his princes, wives, and concubines, at a time when every thing yielded to his authority, when he swam in pleasure, he suddenly perceived a hand that wrote characters on the wall, "then his countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." What was the cause of such extraordinary terror? He could not read the writing, and how did he know whether it foreboded good or evil to him! The wise men of his kingdom when consulted could not read the writing nor make known the interpretation thereof. Why not wait for more insight into the matter? It was not necessary; his conscience, the just commentary of the writing, more quick-sighted than his eyes, more intelligent than all the wise men at his court, recalled to him his profanation and sacrilege, and, in effect, explained to him the writing of the very characters of which he was ignorant.

But behold, on the other hand, the good man, to whom a conscience void of offence affords a continual feast, and fills him with contentment, by enabling him to adopt the following language:—I walk in a pleasant way, in uprightness and sincerity. Whatever happen to me, I have always a right to hope: if I am in an error, I can presume that God will pardon the involuntary faults into which I fall, for want of better information, as he pardoned the apostle Paul, what he had done from ignorance before his conversion. If I am surrounded with misfortune and disgrace, I will make to myself a rampart of my integrity; to it I will retreat as to a place of safety, assured that the evils of this life shall not come nigh me, at least to hurt or overwhelm me. I will say with Job, who was happy that he had preserved a good conscience amid the universal loss of

what of this world he possessed, (xxvii. 5,) "I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." If the calumny of my enemies blacken my character, and expose me to ridicule in this world, I will make myself amends by the secret applause which my conscience will give me. "For our rejoicing is this," says the apostle Paul, (2 Cor. i. 12,) "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world." In fine, when I am about to leave this world, and find myself in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; because my conscience will present to my view a favourable God, and my consolation in these sad moments will be to lay open before him, with king Hezekiah, my manner of life: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." Is. xxxviii. 3.

II. The second thing we proposed to consider was the extent of conscience which regards all the commandments of God, and includes the duties of the first and second table, "toward God and toward man." These are the two objects which an upright conscience ought equally to attend to. All the errors of conscience proceed from men's attending to the one of these objects to the prejudice of the other. All sinners who have not altogether rebelled against their consciences, have compounded with it, in order to lessen their duty either to God or to man. They have divided themselves into two classes. The one class has chosen men, and neglected God, and those of the other have been faithful observers of the duties towards God, in order to get rid of those they owe to man. Those who compose the first class make it an inviolable law to render to men their due, honour to whom honour is due, tribute to whom tribute; to be just in their dealings, true to their word, charitable to the poor, compassionate to the distressed, and complaisant to all the world. But with respect to God, and what is called religion, to impress upon their minds just sentiments of it, to be assiduous in the exercises of public and private devotion, is what they care not for making a matter of conscience. With these we may rank those heathens who, in other respects, careful to preserve the interest of their neighbours, and the rights of society, yet disregarded religion, and did not render to the Divinity the glory which was due to him; and with them we may join those who, in the very bosom of Christianity, boast of their acting like honest heathens, and who confine all man's duty to natural equity.

On the other hand, a second class of men is to be found, who confine all their religion to the duties they owe to God, who show themselves zealous defenders of sound doctrine, constant in their attendance upon public worship, at home regular in praying, praising, and reading the Scriptures; but observe them in their dealings with mankind, and you will find that all this appearance of devotion is only a fine outside, intended to cover their avarice, their duplicity, and their injustice; or, at most, but a pretext for deceiving themselves, and for making themselves amends on man, for all the pain they suffer in the service of God.

Would you have some examples of such characters? Herod had a conscience towards God, because the sanction of an oath did not allow him to refuse what he had promised; but he had no conscience towards man, because he did not blush to defile himself with Herodias, his brother's wife, and put John the Baptist to death. Saul had a conscience towards God, as he told the people (1 Sam. xiv. 33,) that they had transgressed the law of God by eating blood; but he had no conscience towards man, when he caused eighty-five innocent priests to be put to death. This character is eminently exemplified in the conduct of the Jews, who persecuted the Saviour of the world. In it we see a strange mixture of reverence for God, and cruelty to men. They thought it a case of conscience to take the price of blood from Judas; but they did not think conscience concerned when they first gave it to him. They thought it unlawful to put the thirty pieces of silver into the treasury, because they were the price of blood; but they found no difficulty in staining themselves by the effusion of innocent blood. The regard they had for the Sabbath infused a fear, but led them not to allow the body of Christ to remain hanging on the cross on that day; but justice did not prevent them from nailing that very body on the cross, in order to glut their revenge!

It is thus that men manage their conscience suitably to their inclinations, with a view of their more easily discharging what they take to be their duty; it is thus that they form the resolution of being religious,

that they may not be honest men, or of being honest men that they may be able, as they think, to dispense with the practice of religion. The distinction is impossible, as it tends to separate things absolutely inseparable. There can be no conscience towards men without conscience towards God, and no conscience towards God without conscience towards man. There can, we say, be no conscience towards man without conscience towards God; for, from whence arise the different obligations of man to man, and all the duties which bind the conscience, with respect to society, but from the principles of religion, which establishes, strengthens, and enforces them—from what do they arise but from regard to God, that regard which is the great rule and the superior law? That binds us to all the duties we owe our neighbour, as well as to the worship we owe to the Supreme Being. Other authority is not sufficient to check our attempts against the repose and interest of our neighbour. Reason darkened by sin, and the dread of temporal punishment, are so weak defences for this purpose, that men do not think themselves sufficiently secure against the perfidy of mankind, but, by the sanction of an oath, which is a profession of religion.

Indeed, man, if devoid of this respect for God, would consider himself as his chief end, would confine every thing to himself, would be influenced neither by the hope of reward nor by the fear of punishment, and would find nothing to prevent him from sacrificing his neighbour's interest to his own desires, as long as he thought he could not hurt his own interest in this life. This was the opinion of the emperor Constantius Chlorus, father of the great Constantine. This prince was a heathen, but he indiscriminately took into his service both heathens and Christians. One day, with a view to try them, he commanded all the Christians of his household either to renounce their faith and become heathens or quit their office. As at all times men are to be found who acknowledge no other kings but Cæsar, and who prefer the favour of their prince to that of their God, some of them sacrificed to idols; but others of them renounced their worldly interest that they might preserve their religion. After this what did the emperor? He recalled and continued in his service all those who had been faithful to their God, and dismissed, with disgrace, those who, from avarice or ambition, had abjured the Christian faith. He went upon the supposition, that a man who is a traitor to his God, would never be faithful to his prince, and that in order to be a good subject and a good servant, a man must be devout and religious. It is therefore true, that one cannot have a conscience towards men, unless he has a conscience towards God.

Let us reverse the proposition, and we shall be convinced that there is no conscience towards God where a conscience towards man is wanting. For what good purpose does religion or a regard to God answer, when, in other respects, a man has no tender conscience towards his fellow-men, but prostitutes it to every kind of injustice and outrage against his neighbour? This is but the phantom, a false appearance of religion. "If any man among you," says the apostle, James i. 26, "seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain." If any man, as if he had said, give free liberty and an unbounded license to his tongue, in such a manner, that without measure and without charity he blackens his neighbour's character and robs him of his honour, this man ought to know that his religion is vain and imaginary. The apostle does not say that he offends against or hurts religion, but that his religion is vain, and that it gets the name of religion only by an abuse of language. God cannot be worshipped by such who throw a reproach upon religion, and who cover their baseness under the specious pretext of his glory.

But independent of this extent of conscience in regard to its objects there is in it another thing, its constancy and perseverance throughout all the actions of life. This constancy and perseverance of the conscience may be called the distinguishing mark of a conscience void of offence. "Herein do I exercise myself to have" always "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

This is the third thing we proposed to consider, but we cannot at present enter upon it. May God follow with his blessing what on this subject hath been advanced agreeable to his will. Amen.

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